

14

(Majjhima) Ceto,khila Sutta

The (Majjhima) Discourse on Mental Barrenness | M 16

Theme: How to free the mind and liberate it

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1 Sutta summary

1.1 The Ceto,khila Sutta, the “discourse on mental barrenness,” discusses 10 impediments to spiritual growth and awakening. These 10 impediments are the 5 mental barrennesses (*ceto,khila*) and the 5 mental bondages (*cetaso vinibandha*). The Buddha, unprompted,¹ gives the teaching to an assembly of monks in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park monastery.

1.2 Structurally, the Ceto,khila Sutta closely shows a “ring composition,”² thus:

- §1 Preamble (by reciter or redactor).
- §2 **Thesis (1)** stated: It is impossible for those *with* [A] mental barrenness and [B] mental bondage to progress spiritually.
- §§3-7 Negative cycle: [A] promotes lack of faith in 5 ways.
- §7 Tag: “These are the 5 mental barrennesses that he has *not* abandoned.”
- §§8-12 Negative cycle: [B] promotes sensual lust in 5 ways.
- §12 Tag: “These are the 5 types of mental bondage that he has *not* cut off.”
- §13 **Thesis (1) tag (restatement)**: It is impossible for those *with* [A] mental barrenness *or* [B] mental bondage to progress spiritually.
- §14 **Thesis (2)** stated: It is possible for those *with neither* [C] mental barrenness *nor* [D] mental bondage to progress spiritually.
- §§15-19 Positive cycle: [C] promotes faith in 5 ways.
- §19 Tag: “These are the 5 mental barrennesses that he *has* abandoned.”
- §§20-24 Positive cycle: [D] removes sensual lust in 5 ways.
- §24 Tag: “These are the 5 types of mental bondage that he *has* cut off.”
- §25 **Thesis (2) tag (restatement)**: It is possible for those *with neither* [C] mental barrenness *nor* [D] mental bondage to progress spiritually.
- §26 **Sub-thesis**: [E] The 5 bases of success.
- §27 The “breaking-out” tag.
- §27.2 Parable of the hatchlings.
- §27.3 The “breaking-out” tag.
- §28 Closing: The monks joyfully approve.

1.3 The key teachings of the (Majjhima) Ceto,khila Sutta (M 16) are the 10 impediments to spiritual growth and awakening. They comprise the 5 mental barrennesses (*ceto.khila*) and the 5 mental bondages (*cetaso,vinibandha*), summarized as follows:

¹ On the occasions for the Buddha’s teaching, see **Vatthûpama S** (M 7), SD 28.12 (2.1).

² A **ring composition** is a narrative technique said to be characteristic of preliterate peoples or oral modes of composition (such as the early Indian Buddhist suttas). It is also called chiasmus, chiastic structure, or simply ring structure. In ring composition, a narrator touches on a number of topics till a significant topic is reached, then continues on in the narrative by retracing in reverse order the topics which were mentioned on the way to the significant point. Ring composition is an important element in epic poetry like Beowulf, Homeric epics, the Aeneid, Paradise Lost, in the Hebrew scriptures and in many other traditional texts that show signs of being composed orally. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiastic_structure. See Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An essay on ring composition*, Yale: Yale Univ Press, 2007.

The 5 mental barrennesses (ceto,khila)

Cognitive impediments (to be abandoned) [4.1]

- (1) lack of faith in the teacher [§3]
- (2) lack of faith in the Dharma [§4]
- (3) lack of faith in the sangha [§5]
- (4) lack of faith in the training [§6]
- (5) anger and displeasure toward fellow practitioners [§7]

Table 1.3a**The 5 mental bondages (cetaso,vinibandha)**

Affective impediments (to be cut off) [4.2]

- (1) lust for sensual pleasures [§8]
- (2) lust for the body (self) [§9]
- (3) lust for form (others) [§10]
- (4) indulgence in food and sleep [§11]
- (5) aspiration for heavenly birth [§12]

Table 1.3b**2 Comparative study****2.1 RELATED TEXTS****2.1.1 The Ceto,khila Sutta (M 16)**

The Majjhima Nikāya version of **the Ceto,khila Sutta** (M 16) begins by pointing out that a monk who has not abandoned the 5 mental barrennesses and 5 mental bondages will not be able to grow in the Dharma.³ The two Chinese versions and the Aṅguttara Nikāya discourse have a similar statement, with a minor difference that *they explicitly include the nuns (bhikkhūnī)* in their treatment.⁴ The same three versions also make it clear that these mental barrennesses and mental bondage not only prevent personal growth but bring on spiritual decline.⁵

2.1.2 Related Pali suttas

The following suttas give teachings on either the 5 mental barrennesses or the 5 mental bondages. The first five of which have been translated in SD 51.10:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------|
| • (Pañcaka) Ceto,khila Sutta | A 5.205/3:248 | the 5 barrennesses | SD 51.10a |
| • (Navaka) Ceto,khila Sutta | A 9.71/4:460 | the 5 barrennesses and satipatthāna ⁶ | SD 51.10b |
| • (Pañcaka) Vinibandha Sutta | A 5.206/3:249 | the 5 bondages | SD 51.10c |
| • (Navaka) Vinibandha Sutta | A 9.72/4:461 | the 5 bondages and satipatthana | SD 51.10d |
| • (Dasaka) Ceto,khila Sutta | A 10.14/5:17 | the 5 bondages and their cure | SD 51.10e |
| • Saṅgīti Sutta | D 33,2.1(19)/3:237,23 | a list of the 5 mental barrenness | SD 51.10(2.3.4) |
| • Saṅgīti Sutta | D 32,2.1(20)/3:238,12 | a list of the 5 mental bondages | SD 51.10(2.3.5) |

Note that the two **Ceto,khila Suttas** (A 5.205 & A 9.71) are followed immediately by the **Vinibandha Sutta** (A 5.206) and **the Cetaso Vinibandha Sutta** (A 9.72), respectively.⁷ This may not be a matter of mere coincidence, but points to an inner connection between these two respective sets of five factors.⁸

³ M 16/1:1:101,7: *imasmiṃ dhamma,vinaye vuddhiṃ viruḥhiṃ vepullaṃ apajjissatī ti, n' etaṃ ṭhanaṃ vijjati.*

⁴ A 10.14/5:17,16; MĀ 206/T1.780b17 & EĀ 51.4/T2.817a17.

⁵ A 10.14/4:7,17 indicates that “decline in wholesome states is to be expected,” *hāni y'eva pātikaṅkhā kusalesu dhammesu*; MĀ 206/T1.780b19 speaks of “inevitable deterioration in the Dharma,” 必退法 *bì tuì fǎ*; and EĀ 51.4 at T2.817a19 of “decrease in wholesome things,” 善法減 *shàn fǎ jiǎn*.

⁶ This discourse (A 9.71) and **(Navaka) Vinibandha S** (A 9.72), both from the Navaka Nipāta, list the 5 sets respectively like their Pañcaka Nipāta counterparts, but mention that the 4 satipatthanas [M 10, SD 13.3] should be cultivated for the eradication of mental barrenness and mental bondage. This, the 2 Suttas has 9 items each.

⁷ The lists of mental barrenness and mental bondage—besides what is listed at (2.3.1)—also occur in **(Majjhima) Ceto,khila S** (M 16,3-7/1:101), SD 32.14; A 5.205/3:248 = 9.71/4:460 = 10.14/5:17; J 388/3:291; Vbh 941/377; Vism 7.59/211.

2.1.3 Parallels

The Ceto,khila Sutta (M 16) has a Pali parallel in **the (Dasaka) Ceto,khila Sutta** (A 10.14) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, and two Chinese parallels, found in the Madhyama Āgama and the Ekottarika Āgama. In addition to being found in the Pali and Chinese versions of the present discourse, the 5 mental barrennesses recur in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Das'uttara Sutta** (D 34) and their parallels.⁹ The Saṅgīti and Das'uttara Suttas correspond, for example, to the presentations found in **the (Pañcaka) Ceto,-khila Sutta** (A 5.205) and **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Ceto,khila Sutta** (A 9.71).¹⁰ [2.3.1]

2.2 CHINESE VERSIONS

2.2.1 The theme of being under the influence of desire for the body and for sensual pleasures recurs as the first two mental bondages in the Madhyama Āgama version of the Ceto,khila Sutta. The same discourse continues its treatment of mental bondages by listing lack of interest in instructions pertaining to concentration and wisdom, etc; being confused and arrogant, and given to excessive socialization; and being content with having attained little, making no effort to progress further.¹¹

2.2.2 The Ekōttarika Āgama version of the Sūtra differs considerably from the Pali and the Madhyama Āgama accounts of the 5 mental bondages. It agrees with the Pali versions in regard to only one of the mental bondages, namely, on the bondage of fondness for sleep. The other types of mental bondage in this version are to be lazy, to be without concentration, not keeping one's senses restrained, and to prefer the market to quiet places.¹²

2.2.3 Sanskrit fragments of **the Daśōttara Sūtra** have only preserved references to the first and the fifth type of mental barrenness, which are doubt in the teacher and an angry attitude towards one's fellow monks, thereby agreeing with their Pali counterparts.¹³ The Chinese Dīrgha Āgama version of the Daśōttara Sūtra has the same two mental barrennesses as its first and fifth factors, in addition to which it speaks of the lack of faith in the Dharma, in the sangha and in the precepts.¹⁴ Thus the Chinese Daśōttara Sūtra differs from the Pali presentations only in that it speaks of faith in the precepts or moral virtue (*śīla*), instead of faith in the training (*śikṣā*).

In its exposition of such lack of faith in the precepts, the Chinese Daśōttara Sūtra refers to bad and defiled conduct and to having no respect for the precepts. This suggests that one who lacks faith or respect for the precepts will quite probably not keep to them and fall into bad conduct. Understood in this way, this passage would offer a way of bringing together the mental barrenness found in the Pali Ceto,-khila Suttas as lack of faith in the training, in the Madhyama Āgama version as lack of faith in the precepts, and in the Ekōttarika Āgama version as breaking one's precepts and not confessing such a breach. Despite the difference in wording, all versions would then seem to agree on the essential implications of this type of mental barrenness.¹⁵

⁸ See SD 50.20 (3.1.2).

⁹ D 33/3:237,23 & D 34/3:278,12. [2.1.2]

¹⁰ A 5.205/3:248 & A 9.71/4:460.

¹¹ MĀ 206/T1:780c8+15+20.

¹² EĀ 51.4/T2:817b6+10+12+13.

¹³ Fragment S 362 V7 and R2 in Mittal 1957: 34; cf also Dietz 2000: 135.

¹⁴ DĀ 10/T1.53c7.

¹⁵ It needs to be noted, however, that lack of faith in the "training," *sikkhā*, as mentioned in **Ceto,khila S** (M 16/-1:101,17), may not refer only to training in the precepts. According to the commentarial gloss at SnA 68, "training" in the present context should in fact be understood to encompass the entire path, covering the training in higher moral conduct (*adhisīla,sikkhā*, ie moral virtue for the sake of mental development), in higher mental development (*adhicitta,sikkhā*) itself, and in higher wisdom (*adhipañña,sikkhā*).

3 The key terms and ideas

3.1 MENTAL BARRENNESS (*ceto, khila*)

3.1.1 The term *ceto, khila*

3.1.1.1 The compound *ceto, khila* is resolved as *ceto* + *khila*. The word *ceto* (Skt *cetas*) is *citta* (mind) when used as a prefix.¹⁶ The word *khila*¹⁷ literally means “wasteland or fallow land” (A 3:248), both literally and figuratively. In the Sanskrit usage of *khila* (around the Buddha’s time), it literally means “a piece of waste or uncultivated land, situated between cultivated fields, desert, bare soil” (SED). It is, however, more commonly used in its figurative sense of “mental barrenness,” that is, mental inertia or obstruction.¹⁸ In the suttas. It is always used as a noun in this sense.¹⁹ [3.1.2]

3.1.1.2 Five types of *ceto, khila* are listed in **the Ceto, khila Sutta** (M 16) and its related discourses [2.1]. The 5 mental barrennesses (*ceto, khila*) are: lack of faith in the 3 jewels and in the training, and harbouring negative thoughts to fellow practitioners [§§3-7]. Any of these 5 barrennesses can prevent us from “ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving” (*ātappāya anuyogāya sātaccāya padhānāya*).

The 5 mental barrennesses, in other words, are the **cognitive** nature of the mind or attitudes that hinder us from cultivating the wisdom of practice and direction of progress. In simple terms, we are still strongly rooted in lust, hate and delusion, and being distracted and drained by our wrong pursuits and quests, we are left “barren” (*khila*) of the good qualities that feed and powers our spiritual efforts. This is clear from **the Khila Sutta** (S 45.166), a short but old discourse reminding us that this barrenness is the 3 unwholesome roots themselves [3.1.2].

3.1.2 *Khila*

SD 32.14(3.1.2)

Khila Sutta

The Discourse on Barrenness | S 45.166/5:57

Traditional: S 5.1.13.6, Samyutta Nikāya 5, Mahā Vagga 1, Magga Samyutta 13, Esanā Vagga 6

Theme: The 3 kinds of barrenness

- 1 Bhikshus, there are these **3 kinds of barrenness** (*khila*).
What are the three?
- 2 (1) The barrenness of lust *rāga khila*
(2) The barrenness of hatred *dosa, khila*
(3) The barrenness of delusion *moha, khila*
- 3 These, bhikshus, are the 3 kinds of barrenness.

¹⁶ Eg *ceto, padosa*, “mental fault” (A 1.8; It 12, 13 opp *pasāda*); *ceto, vimutti*, “liberation of mind,” usu with *paññā, vimutti* (V 1:11 *akuppā*; D 1:156, 167, 251, 3:78, 108, 248 *muditā*; M 197 *akuppā*, 205, 296, 3:145 *appamāṇa, mahaggaṭā*; S 2:265 *mettā*; A 1:124, 2:6, 36, 3:84; Sn 725, 727 = It 106; It 20 *mettā*, 75, 97; Pug 27, 62; Vbh 86 *mettā*); *ceto, samādhi*, “mental concentration” (D 1:15, 3:30; S 4:297; A 2:54, 3:51).

¹⁷ Not to be confused with *khīla*, “pillar, post.”

¹⁸ Comy to S 123* in (Devatā) **Samaya S** (S 1.37/1:27), SD 86.12, explain each of these words, *khila*, “barrenness,” *paligha*, “crossbar” and *inda, khila*, “Indra’s pillar” (note the long -ī-), as referring to lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), respectively (SA 1:77). These 3 unwholesome roots are listed in **Khila S** (S 45.166/1:57), SD 32.14(3.1.2), these 3 are called *khila*, but in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,30/1:139,19-22), SD 3.13, *paligha* refers to ignorance (MA 2:115,25). In (Majjhima) **Ceto, khila S** (M 16), *khila* means “barrenness,” both literally and figuratively. [3.1.1.1]

¹⁹ See Sn:N 330 n780.

- 4 Bhikshus, the noble eightfold path is to be cultivated
 for direct knowledge, *abhiññāya*
 for the full understanding, *pariññāya*
 for the utter destruction, *parikkhāya*
 for the abandoning *pahānāya*

of these 3 kinds of barrenness.

5 And what, bhikshus, is **the noble eightfold path**?

THE *VIVEKA,NISSITA* CYCLE²⁰

Here, bhikshus, a monk

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| (1) | ²¹ cultivates | <u>right view</u> | dependent on solitude, ²²
dependent on fading away (of lust) [on dispassion], ²³
dependent on cessation (of suffering), ²⁴
ripening in letting go (of defilements); ²⁵ |
| (2) | cultivates | <u>right thought</u> | <i>dependent on solitude,</i>
<i>dependent on fading away,</i>
<i>dependent on cessation,</i>
<i>ripening in letting go;</i> |
| (3) | cultivates | <u>right speech</u> | <i>dependent on solitude,</i>
<i>dependent on fading away,</i>
<i>dependent on cessation,</i>
<i>ripening in letting go;</i> |
| (4) | cultivates | <u>right action</u> | <i>dependent on solitude,</i>
<i>dependent on fading away,</i>
<i>dependent on cessation,</i>
<i>ripening in letting go;</i> |
| (5) | cultivates | <u>right livelihood</u> | <i>dependent on solitude,</i>
<i>dependent on fading away,</i>
<i>dependent on cessation,</i>
<i>ripening in letting go;</i> |
| (6) | cultivates | <u>right effort</u> | <i>dependent on solitude,</i>
<i>dependent on fading away,</i>
<i>dependent on cessation,</i> |

²⁰ See *Viveka,nissita*, SD 20.4.

²¹ *Sammā,diṭṭhiṃ bhāveti viveka,nissitaṃ virāga,nissitaṃ nirodha,nissitaṃ vossagga,pariṇāmiṃ.*

²² Here “solitude” (*viveka*), or seclusion, has a special reference to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*). This whole phrase, beginning with “dependent on solitude is called **the viveka,nissita formula**. See Gethin 2001:162-168. According to **Paṭisambhidā,magga**, there are 5 kinds of “solitude” (*viveka*): (1) solitude through suppression (*vikkhambhana viveka*); (2) solitude through the substitution of opposite or displacement by opposites (*tad-aṅga viveka*); (3) solitude through cutting off (*samuccheda viveka*); (4) solitude through tranquillization (*paṭipassaddhi viveka*); and (5) solitude through escape (*nissaraṇa viveka*) (Pm 1:27, 2:219-224; Vism 13.12/-410, 22.110/693). See also **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** intro, SD 13.1 (4.2c).

²³ *Virāga*, also tr as “dispassion.”

²⁴ *Nirodha*, ie, “non-arising of suffering.”

²⁵ MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (*vossagga*): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), ie the abandonment of defilements, (*kilesa*), and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), and it is the way itself (*maggo eva vossagga,pariṇāmi*), culminating in nirvana (MA 1:85 f = SA 1:159 = VbhA 316). Gethin notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjhaṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriya* and *bala* (2001:162 f). This formula shows that that each *bojjhaṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166).

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---|
| (7) cultivates | <u>right mindfulness</u> | <i>ripening in letting go;
dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away,
dependent on cessation,
ripening in letting go;</i> |
| (8) cultivates | <u>right concentration</u> | <i>dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away,
dependent on cessation,
ripening in letting go.</i> |

6 This noble eightfold path, bhikshus, is *to be cultivated direct knowledge, for the full understanding, for the utter destruction, for the abandoning* of these 3 kinds of barrenness.²⁶

— evaṃ —

3.1.2.1 The Khila Sutta (S 45.166) [3.1.2] uses *khila* [3.1.1.1] in reference to a very old triad, that of lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). This usage is unique because this triad is better known as the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*).²⁷ This Sutta is, of course, related to the teachings of the (Majjhima) Ceto, khila Sutta—for the simple reason that all the 5 mental barrennesses and the 5 mental bondages are rooted in lust, hate and delusion, are need to be eradicated by the noble eightfold path, as stated in the Khila Sutta. [4.1.0]

3.1.2.2 On the positive side, the fallowness or barrenness of the mind can be “broken up”—*khilam pabhindī*—as stated in **the (Lakkhaṇa) Channa Sutta** (S 22.90)²⁸ and **the Sāriputta Sutta** (Sn 973c)²⁹ Such a mind is said to be *akhila*, “free from barrenness, open-hearted,” as in the phrase, “the mind well-concentrated ... unobstructed [open] towards all beings” (*cittaṅ ca susamāhitam ... akhilam sabba, bhūtesu*, S 4:118+119*). An old form, *avigata, khila* (having abandoned barrenness) is found in **the Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 19).

3.1.3 Lack of faith

3.1.3.1 Lack of faith in the Buddha and the Dharma are the first two mental barrennesses in all versions. The Pali versions continue with lack of faith in the sangha, lack of faith in the training (*sikkhā*) and an angry attitude towards one’s companions in the holy life.³⁰ [4.1.1-4.1.4]

3.1.3.2 The Madhyama Āgama version speaks instead of lack of faith in the precepts, in the training and in those fellow monks whom the Buddha has praised.³¹ The Ekōttarika Āgama account agrees with the Pali versions on lack of faith in the Sangha as one type of mental barrenness,³² after which it mentions the mental barrenness of breaking one’s precepts and not confessing such a breach, and the mental barrenness of living the holy life with the aspiration of being reborn in a heavenly realm.

²⁶ This Sutta has been full laid out following the Siamese edition of the Pali.

²⁷ S 45.166/5:57; on *akusala, mūla*, see **(Akusala, mūla) Añña, titthiyā S** (A 3.68/1:199-201), SD 16.4.

²⁸ S 22.90/3:134 (SD 56.5).

²⁹ Sn 4.16/973b (SD 92.11).

³⁰ M 16/1:101,17; A 10.14/5:18,4.

³¹ MĀ 206/T1.780b23.

³² EĀ 51.4/T2.817a25.

3.1.4 Desire for heavenly rebirth

The aspiration to be reborn in a heavenly realm occurs also in the two Pali versions, where it constitutes one of the 5 mental bondages.³³ Other discourses qualify this type of aspiration as a way of getting “caught”³⁴ or being “bound.”³⁵ This terminology supports placing this aspiration under the heading of a mental “bondage,” the placing it has in the Ceto,khila Suttas. [4.1.5]

3.1.5 Summary of the 5 mental barrennesses

The different presentations of the 5 mental barrennesses can then be summed up as lack of faith in the 3 jewels, lack of faith in the precepts together with its resulting bad conduct and a type of attitude towards one’s fellow companions in the holy life that is dominated by anger and lack of faith [§§3-7]. The first four of these mental barrennesses would work as the direct opposites of the 4 limbs of streamwinning,³⁶ while the fifth mental barrenness would be the type of attitude that prevents a monk from being able to learn from other monks.³⁷ This makes it clear why these 5 qualities are collected together under the heading of “mental barrenness.”

3.2 MENTAL BONDAGE (*cetaso,vinbandha*)

3.2.1 Occurrences

After their exposition of the 5 mental barrennesses, the Ceto,khila Suttas³⁸ turn to the 5 mental bondages, which are desire for sensual pleasures: desire for the body, desire for form, overeating and over-indulging in sleep, and living the holy life with the aspiration to be reborn in a heavenly realm. [§§8-12]

In addition to being found in the (Majjhima) Ceto,khila Sutta (M 16) and its parallels, the 5 mental barrennesses occur twice as independent discourses in different parts of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, notably each time immediately followed by another discourse that treats the 5 mental barrenness. [4.2]

3.2.2 Definitions

3.2.2.1 The term *vinibandha* is a strong one, and comes from *vi* (“cut in two, split”) + *nibandha* (“binding, continuing”), which is itself resolved as *ni* (“down”) + *bandha* (“binding”). As such, *viniban-*

³³ M 16/1:102,9 and A 10.14/5:18,24.

³⁴ S 35.200/4:180,21 and its parallels SĀ 1174/T2.315a2 and EĀ 43.3/T2.759a18 consider the aspiration for a celestial rebirth to be a form of being “caught by non-humans,” *amanussa-g,gaho*, 非人取者, 非人所捉者.

³⁵ A 7.47/4:56,1 refers to this type of aspiration as being “bound by the bondage of sexuality,” *saṃyutto methunena saṃyogena*; the corresponding statement from a parallel found in the Sikṣā,samuccaya in Bendall 1970: 76,14 similarly reads: *saṃyukto maithunena dharmeṇa*; cf. also Hahn 1977: 207.

³⁶ These are the 4 *sotāpanassa aṅgāni*: perfect faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, together with unblemished moral conduct, found eg in D 33/3:227,6.

³⁷ An illustrative instance can be found at S 22.90/3:134,21 and its parallel SĀ 262/T2:66c20. These 2 discourses begin by describing that the monk Channa was unable to accept the instructions given to him by other monks. When he finally visited Ānanda and asked for help, Ānanda replied that Channa, by requesting instruction, had broken his mental barrenness, *khilam pabhindi*, 偽刺破虛, and become fit to understand the Dharma. S:B 2000: 1084 n 182 comments that “Channa’s problem seems to have been the fifth [mental barrenness], anger and contemptuousness towards his fellow monks.” The same topic recurs also in Sn 4.16/973, which instructs to “break the mental barrenness towards companions in the holy life,” *sabrahmacārīsu khilam pabhinde*.

³⁸ For annotated translations of the first 5 suttas—A 5.205, A 9.71, A 5.206, A 9.72 and A 10.14—are found in SD 51.10.

dha has the sense of being stuck with a mindset, fallen down into a mental rut, that sees things as a duality (in a split manner), a divisive distance.³⁹

3.2.2.2 The 5 mental bondages (in their Pali version) are similarly concerned with the **affective** aspects of the mind: it is to do with how our feelings and emotions can affect us negatively [2.3]. On account of being distracted and drained by sensual pleasures, the body, form, indulgence in food and sleep, and aspiring for heavenly life, we lose our inspiration and enthusiasm which are vital for spiritual energy and growth.

The Commentary glosses *vinibandha* in terms of “sensual pleasure,” taking it as connoting both the objects of sense-desire (*vatthu, kāma*) as well as sensual desire as a defilement (*kilesa, kāma*) (MA 2:69,-5).⁴⁰ In other word, we are bound by our sense-desires and defined by the sense-objects that we chase after and try to collect. [3.2.2.2]

The Commentary on **the (Pañcaka) Vinibandha Sutta** (A 5.206) explains *vinibandha* as follows: “Having pinned the mind down, it grasps it as if in the fist; hence, it is a mental bondage.”⁴¹ Although we are seen as running after some attractive sense-object, the reality is that, because of our lack of wisdom, we are actually being relentlessly dragged along by that desirable object: we are bound to it, like a trainer leading a dog or horse on a leash. We are in the grasp of subhuman conditionings that crushes down our human potential for growth and awakening.

3.2.3 The problem addressed by the passage on **mental bondage** [§§8-14] is not that of a lack of growth, but rather of growth in the wrong direction, since the 5 mental bondages are *desire for sensual pleasures, for the body, for forms, for food and sleep, and for the pleasures of a heavenly rebirth*—in short, a libidinous or lust-driven inclination.

The 5 mental bondages, compounded by the 5 mental barrennesses, would, in due course, aggravate into **the 7 bonds of sexuality** (*methuna saṃyoga*), listed in **the Methuna Sutta** (A 7.47) as follows:

- (1) enjoying physical contact;
- (2) socializing (especially for the sake of entertainment);⁴²
- (3) lusting after the physical form;
- (4) distracted by pleasurable sounds;
- (5) delighting in frivolities with others;
- (6) approving of others indulging in physical pleasures; and
- (7) living the holy life for the sake of going to heaven.

(A 7.47/4:54-56), SD 21.9

³⁹ S 2:17, 3:135, 186; A 1:66; Sn 16.

⁴⁰ *Vinibandhesu kāme ti vatthu, kāme pi kilesa, kāme pi.*

⁴¹ *Cetaso, vinibandhāti cittaṃ vinibandhitvā muṭṭhiyaṃ katvā viya ganhantīti cetaso, vinibandhā* (AA 3:325).

⁴² Elsewhere, the word *asamsaṭṭha* is used in this context. This is a clear allusion to the character of the forest eremite, a wandering forest monk. The expression, “(they) live socializing” (*samsaṭṭhā viharissanti*) occurs at **Anāgata, bhaya S 4** (A 5.80.5+6/3:109), SD 1.10(3.4). **Vinaya** disapproves of the nun Thulla, nandā “living and socializing [in close proximity]” with unwholesome lay companions (Saṅgh 9 = V 4:239); Thulla, nandā’s female probationer, Caṇḍa, kālī, “socializing with householders and householders’ sons” (*samsaṭṭhā viharati gahapatināpi gahapati, puttena pi*, V 4:293); the female probationer Caṇḍa, kālī who lived “in close proximity with men and youths” (*purisa, samsaṭṭha kumāraka, samsaṭṭha*) who were violent (V 4:333); monks should carry out an act of censure (*tajjanīya, kamma*) against monastics living “in the company of householders” (*gihi, samsaṭṭha*, Cv 1.4.1 = V 2:4). VA says that they were “mixed up” (*missi, bhūtā*) with the world: in terms of *the body*, they were pounding and cooking for householders, perfuming and adorning themselves, using garlands and chains; in terms of *speech*, they were acting as go-between, running errands (VA 915). Comy gives 5 kinds of socializing (*samsagga*): through hearing, seeing, conversing, eating with, and bodily contact (MA 2:143). For an example of a monk who is above such socializing, ie Puṇṇa Mantāni, putta, see **Ratha, vinīta S** (M 24,2/1:145 f), SD 28.3.

These 7 “bonds of sexuality” are so called because they still bind us to thinking about coupling with another, which is the basis for sense-pleasures and sexuality, even though externally there is a façade of sexual abstinence and austerity.

3.3 THE SET OF 10 OBSTRUCTIONS

3.3.1 The Ekōttarika Āgama version

As the sets of 5 mental barrennesses and 5 types of mental bondage are closely related, they can be brought together as a set of *ten types* of affective obstructions. These ten obstructions characterize either a lack of appropriate sentiments towards spiritual growth, or else misdirected sentiments, as any of them will undermine the inspiration and enthusiasm necessary for spiritual progress.

Although the Ekōttarika Āgama version agrees with the Pali versions on lack of faith in the Sangha as one type of mental barrenness,⁴³ after that it mentions the mental barrenness of breaking one’s precepts and not confessing such a breach, and the mental barrenness of living the holy life with the aspiration of being reborn in a heavenly realm.

In view of this inner connection between these two sets, the Pali versions’ list of mental bondages fits the present context well, while the mental bondages listed in the Ekōttarika Āgama version offers a less probable reading.

3.3.2 Parables

An Aṅguttara Nikāya version, **the (Dasaka) Ceto,khila Sutta** (A 10.14), illustrates the *detrimental* effect of the 5 mental barrennesses and the 5 mental bondages with the parable of the waning moon, which decreases every day in roundness, splendour and beauty,⁴⁴ followed by comparing freedom from these 10 obstructions to *the waxing moon* that every day increases in roundness, splendour and beauty.

The Ekōttarika Āgama discourse, however, compares the *detrimental* effect of these ten obstructions to a hen that does *not* properly hatch her eggs, as a result of which the chicks will not come to growth and maturity,⁴⁵ followed by employing the parable of the hatchlings, of how a hen carefully prepares to brood, to illustrate the case of a practitioner *who overcomes these obstructions*.

The Ekōttarika Āgama discourse concludes by predicting that one who has overcome the 5 mental barrennesses can be sure of a favourable rebirth, either in a heavenly realm or as a human being.⁴⁶ This is simply contrary to what is taught in the Ceto,khila Sutta (M 16) and its parallels, which actually speaks against a monastic living the holy life for the sake of heavenly rebirth.

3.3.3 The 5 bases of success

3.3.3.1 While the two Ceto,khila Sutta versions found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya and the Ekōttarika Āgama conclude here, the two versions found in the Majjhima Nikāya and the Madhyama Āgama, goes further [§26]. Here, however, MĀ says that the monks

修欲定心
成就斷如意足
依離、依無欲

cultivate meditation based on desire [enthusiasm] [*chanda*],
accomplished in an eradicating base of success [*iddhi,pāda*],
which depends on aloofness, on no desire,

⁴³ EĀ 51.4/T2.817a25.

⁴⁴ A 10.14/5:19,8.

⁴⁵ EĀ 51.4/T2.817b17. This simile recurs in M 53/1:357,6; S 22.101/3:153,14 and its parallels in a Gāndhārī sutra fragment in Glass 2006: 166, the Senior Karoṣṭhi fragment 5 lines 40-41, and in SĀ 263/T2.67b1; in A 7.67/4:125,-18; and in A 8.11/4:176,7 and its parallel MĀ 157/T1.679c4. On the Senior collection, see R Salomon 2003.

⁴⁶ EĀ 51.4/T2.817c13.

依滅、依捨
趣向非品

on cessation, on letting go,
which leads towards *fēipīn* (“without marks,” ie, *nirvāṇa*). (T1.26.781b4-8)

The same is said of the *iddhi, pāda* of effort (*vīriya* 精進), mind (*citta* 心) and investigation (*vīmaṃsā* 思惟). This is, of course, the *viveka, nissita* formula, which is not found in the Majjhima version.⁴⁷

3.3.3.2 These two versions (M and MĀ), however, agree in taking up five more qualities to be cultivated, that is, the 4 bases of spiritual success (*iddhi, pāda*) and exertion (*ussoḷhi*)—sometimes called the “5 bases of success”⁴⁸ [3.3.4.4]. It is at this point that these two versions also have the parable of the hatchlings, explaining that just as when a hen has properly hatched her eggs, the chickens will grow well, even so a monk endowed with the 4 ways to spiritual success and exertion will be able to progress to awakening.⁴⁹ [3.3.4.5]

3.3.4 Overcoming the barrennesses and the bondages

3.3.4.1 Both the (Navaka) *Ceto, khila Sutta* (A 9.71) and the (Navaka) *Vinibandha Sutta* (A 9.72) list the 5 sets respectively, close with mentioning that **the 4 satipatthānas**⁵⁰ should be cultivated for the eradication of mental barrenness and mental bondage.⁵¹ **The 4 foundations of mindfulness** (*satipaṭṭhānā*) begin with body-based meditations or contemplations (*kāyānupassanā*), and then go on to the contemplation of feelings (*vedanā ’nupassanā*), the contemplation of mind (*cittānupassana*), the contemplation of dharmas (*dham, mānupassanā*) (M 10, SD 13.3).

3.3.4.2 At any stage of these meditations—especially that of breath meditation (of the body-based contemplations)—we may be able to overcome **the 5 mental hindrances** (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*)—desire for sensual pleasures, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and guilt, and doubt⁵²—and attain dhyana (*jhāna*).⁵³ The key ingredient in removing, even temporarily, or weakening them, is that of **a profound and pervasive joy and happiness** (*pīti, sukha*) generated by the dhyana.⁵⁴

3.3.4.3 The key element of the arising and persistence of the mental barrennesses is **a lack of joy** in the 3 jewels, the training and the spiritual community. On the other hand, mental bondages are rooted in *a wrong kind of joy*: **lust**, whose twin is **hate**. The dhyanic joy—or even a habitual cultivation of lovingkindness (*mettā, bhāvanā*)⁵⁵—helps overcome *lust*, with which *ill will* subsides, too. This is the **calm** (*samatha*) aspect of our meditation.⁵⁶

After emerging from our meditation with a calm, clear and joyful mind, we are ready and able to reflect the true nature of reality beginning with that of **impermanence**, that is, with the perception of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*).⁵⁷ While **lovingkindness** helps us to overcome the ill will that weakens our faith

⁴⁷ See Thich Minh Chau 1991:95; Gethin 2001:92 n45. See *Viveka, nissita*, SD 20.4.

⁴⁸ M 16,26/1:103,36: *ussoḷhi* and MĀ 206/1:781b8: 堪任.

⁴⁹ M 16,28-30/1:104,11 and MĀ 206/T1.781b14.

⁵⁰ M 10/1:55-63 (SD 13.3).

⁵¹ *Imesaṃ ... pañcannaṃ ceto, khilaṃ pahānāya ... ime cattāro sati ’paṭṭhāna bhāvetabbā* (A 4:460,28); *Imesaṃ ... pañcannaṃ cetaso vinibandhānaṃ pahānāya ... ime cattāro sati ’paṭṭhāna bhāvetabbā* (A 4:461,26).

⁵² In Pali, respectively: *kāma-c, chanda, vyāpāda, thīna, middha, uddhacca, kukkuccha* and *vicikicchā*. See *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

⁵³ See *Dhyana*, SD 8.4.

⁵⁴ See *Vimuttāyatana S* (A 5.26,2.3), SD 21.5 (2); SD 10.15 (4.4.1+4.4.2). On **joy** (*pāmojja*) as a catalyst in meditation and in spiritual cultivation, see SD 8.4 (6.3); also reflection: “Joy as food” 2011, R197: <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/R197-Joy-as-food-110713-156.pdf>.

⁵⁵ On **the cultivation of lovingkindness**, see *Karaṇīya Metta S* (Khp 9 = Sn 1.8) + SD 38.3 (6).

⁵⁶ On the roles of **calm and insight** in meditation, see *Samatha and vipassanā*, SD 41.1.

⁵⁷ See (*Anicca*) *Cakkhu S* (S 25.1) + SD 16.7 (5); *Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S* (M 62,23) SD 3.11.

in the 3 jewels, our training and the spiritual community, this **insight** (*vipassanā*) aspect of our meditation helps us understand our mind and emotions more clearly and empowers us to subdue, even eradicate our negative emotions that hold us in *bondage*.

3.3.4.4 The effects of the *satipaṭṭhāna* are a mind of calm and clarity with pervasive joy. This is a very empowering and energizing kind of joy. With regular practice, we cultivate and sustain this joy which gives us the drive or **zeal** (*chanda*), the joyful interest in our spiritual life of moral virtue, meditation, sutta study and growing wisdom. Our spiritual health generates an abundance of **effort and energy** (*vīriya*) for a Dharma-spirited life. Our **mind** (*citta*) is nurtured with joyful calm and clarity, which becomes our examining table for the **investigation** (*vīmaṃsā*) of our mind and heart, how we think and feel—how all this is impermanent, changing, become other.

We keep up this dynamic habit of zeal, mind, energy and investigation so that they become **the bases of success** (*iddhi,pāda*). As continue to cultivate these bases, we may even go on to develop mental powers that surpass normal humans, power that help us in our Dharma practice and propagation.

When we possess these “**15 factors including exertion**”⁵⁸ [§267]—overcoming the 5 barrennesses and the 5 bondages, and cultivating the 5 bases of success—we are “capable of breaking through (our limitations by spiritual knowledge), capable of self-awakening, capable of attaining the supreme security from the yoke (nirvana)” [§27].

3.3.4.5 The (Majjhima) Ceto, khila Sutta closes with the well known **parable of the hatchlings** [§28]. Essentially, the parable says that a mother hen would merely incubate her eggs (like the Buddha teaching the Dharma) and the hatchlings will break out through their egg-shells unaided at the proper time, to emerge as independent chicks without the aid of the mother hen. We, too, awaken to nirvana by our own efforts, without the agency of the Buddha.

On a deeper level, the parable is pointing to the nature of the awakening process. When we have made the right initial moves in our practice, there is no more need for any intention or thought behind the mental process that follows, that is, when the mind is in deep meditation or in the process of spiritual liberation. It will take its own gradual course like a flower blossoming the radiant sunshine. This process is explained in, for example, **the (Ekādasaka) Cetanā’karaṇīya Sutta** (A 11.2).⁵⁹

4 Significance of the teachings

4.1 MENTAL BARRENNESS

4.1.0 Definition

“**Mental barrenness**” refers to unfertile ground, where nothing can grow [3.1.1.1; 3.1.2]. When the mind is barren, it lacks any kind of support for spiritual growth and awakening. If we are mentally barren, we will never evolve as a Buddhist or a spiritual person. Hence, we can say that this is having a negative mindset that is not conducive to the Dharma life.

The 5 mental barrenness (*ceto, khila*) [3.2] refer to those **cognitive aspects** of our life that only serve to hinder our spiritual development and awakening in this life [3.1.1.2]. They reflect our negative attitudes towards the core and foundation of our spiritual life, that is, **the 5 catalytic factors** that are the 3 jewels, Dharma training and spiritual fellowship [§§15-19]. We will examine the overcoming of each of these 5 barrennesses in terms the Dharma and right practice.

⁵⁸ “**The 15 factors including exertion**” (*ussolhi, paṇṇa.ras’ aṅga*) are the abandoning of the 5 barrennesses and of the 5 bondages, and the 5 “bases of success” [§26].

⁵⁹ A 11.2/5:312 f (SD 33.3b).

4.1.1 “Neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful in the teacher” [§15]

4.1.1.1 In post-Buddha times, including our own,. The lack of faith in the historical Buddha is ironically based on the views that either he is dead or that he is not. These are speculative views on the posthumous state of one “thus-gone” (*tathâgata*), which the Buddha advises us to avoid.⁶⁰ Those who view the Buddha as “dead,” feel abandoned or helpless, and turn to rituals and vows for succour and salvation. Such views turn monastics into priests who dispense blessings and absolve us of our karmic lapses and ill fortune. The Buddha rejects such an externalization of our “refuge” or “locus of control”: see especially **the (Pañcaka) It̥ṭha Sutta** (A 5.43).⁶¹

Those who reject the Buddha’s “death,” tend to view him as some kind of “projection” of a cosmic Buddha or Dharma-body (like a Godhead). They regard the historical Buddha as non-existent, that is, merely as a phantom-figure or holographic image who pretends to be human, to teach and so on, Such an wild imaginative theology is totally alien to the early Buddhist texts, and should be rejected outright.

Such speculative views are the reason for their believers’ lack of faith in the historical Buddha, his teachings and spiritual community. Or, they are relegated to some “inferior vehicle or path,” while they create new Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and paradises, effectively rejecting all the key teachings of the historical Buddha.

4.1.1.2 We do not have “faith” in the Buddha as a person or agent (such as a God-idea or guru figure) —but as the one who has discovered the path to awakening, and we are his followers, as taught in **the Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58).⁶² The awakening that we will attain as arhats is the same as the Buddha’s awakening: it is just prisoners who have been freed from prison once their sentences has been served or are given their freedom. The freedom of one prisoner is not different from that of any of the others.

4.1.1.3 Note that the Sutta says that we should be committed and faithful “in the teacher” (*satthari*), not in “the Buddha.” This is important to note: in terms of our practice, the Buddha is what the Buddha does, so to speak. Almost immediately after his awakening—as recorded in **the Gārava Sutta** (S 6.2)—he declares that he himself will “live in dependence of the Dharma” (*tam eva dhammam ... upanissāya vihareyyam*).⁶³

With this vital statement, the Buddha effectively “transfers his charisma” to the Dharma—the Dharma is the teacher. This important event and truth is endorsed again by the Buddha during his last days—as recorded in **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16)—when he declares to Ānanda:

“Ānanda, it may be that you may think:

‘Gone is the Teacher’s word! We have no teacher.’

It should not be seen thus, Ānanda, for **the Dharma and the Vinaya** [the teaching and the discipline] that I have taught and explained to you, will, at my passing, be your teacher.

D 16,6.1/2:154 (SD 9) + nn

The Buddha’s declaring the Dharma to be our teacher, the Buddha effectively lives on, as it were as our teacher even to this day—that is as long as we have, understand, practise and realize it. This Dharma, then, is like the Constitution of a democratic country. We may not have faith in the human leaders, but we have faith that the Constitution define our nation and protect our basic rights as citizens. Hence, it is clear why the Buddha places the Dharma above even himself.

⁶⁰ These speculative questions on the Buddha’s posthumous state are the tetralemma on whether after death, the Buddha (1) exists, (2) does not exist, (3) both, and (4) neither: see **Anurādha S** (S 22.86,4) SD 21.13; **Cūḷa Mālunkya,putta S** (M 63,2.2) + SD 5.8 (2+3); **The unanswered questions** SD 40a.10 (3-4).

⁶¹ A 5.43/3:47-49 (SD 47.2).

⁶² S 22.58 (SD 49.10).

⁶³ S 6.2,8/1:138-140 (SD 12.3).

For that reason, too, we should have our full and wise faith in the Buddha, even after his passing, especially today when his teachings face greater challenges than ever before, and is vitally need that ever before.⁶⁴ **The Buddha's passing** finally authenticates his own teaching and confirms the nature of true reality—that everyone, all the exist—whether unawakened or awakened, human or divine, animate or inanimate, in the past, present or future—is subject to change, unsatisfactoriness and non-self.⁶⁵

This power of awakening is not embodied merely in the Buddha himself, but more so—but the transferring of his charisma onto the Dharma, not upon himself—he has allowed the Dharma to preserve and propagate the possibility for self-awakening down to this day, and to the foreseeable future. For this, we unreservedly rejoice in faith in and gratitude to the Buddha.

4.1.2 “Neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful in the Dharma” [§16]

4.1.2.1 According to the **Gārava Sutta** (S 6.2) and the **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), as stated above [4.1.1.3], the Dharma is our one and only refuge. It is the Dharma that the Buddha himself respects (*gārava*), and it is the realization of the Dharma that there are those who form the sangha of noble saints. Traditionally, this is the Buddha Dharma (*buddha, dhamma*),⁶⁶ but a better known term is the Buddha's teaching (*buddha, sāsana*).

In worldly terms, the Dharma is “**early Buddhism**,” the teachings of the historical Buddha in the early Buddhist texts called *suttas* (*sutta*). Although *sutra* is also commonly used amongst the Theravāda communities, more broadly it has come to refer to post-Buddha works by various teachers and writers propounding their own views and ideologies.

4.1.2.2 The teachings of the historical Buddha are preserved as the “**early Buddhist texts**” (EBT) in the *Ti,piṭaka*, which is also called “the Pali canon,” since it uses Pali throughout. It helps to see these early Buddhist texts, especially the *suttas*, to be like computer programmes. Such programmes need to be run for their benefits to take effect. They may not be perfect programmes—all computer programmes somehow have errors and glitches—but if we run them, we will work fine enough for us to have a very good idea of what the Buddha intends us to know, practise and realize for ourselves.

Merely reading and studying computer programmes—even all the world's computer programmes or even just the best ones—will not bring us awakening. The EBTs are the Buddha's programmes for us to run in our computer that is the mind: it teaches us to cultivate moral virtue (such as keeping a minimum of the 5 precepts), mental concentration (at least being mindful of our thoughts, speech and actions), and insight wisdom (to at least habitually reflect on the impermanence of all existence). These are the **3 trainings**⁶⁷ for happiness and self-awakening in this life.

4.1.2.3 Faith in the Dharma does not entails neither rituals nor vows. When we turn to rituals and vows to seek solace or find solution for our problems, then we are looking for answers *outside* of ourself when the problems are caused from *within* our own minds. To be faithful to the Dharma means to stay with it from the start, right in the middle, to the very end: *the start is a morally upright life; the middle is a calm and mindful habit; and the end is wisdom into the impermanence of all things*.

For this reason, the Buddha declares amongst his last instructions that the highest respect or worship we can show the Buddha is not praying or even letting divine music and song to fill the air, or rain

⁶⁴ On *Sāriputta's* having “no faith” in the Buddha, see SD 40a.8 (5.6.2). On *Citta the houselord's* statement that it is “not by faith” in the Buddha that he has attained spiritual states of distinction, see SD 40a.8 (5.6.3).

⁶⁵ This is an abridgement of the “totality formula” summarizing the nature and extent of the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*), ie, “whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near”: (**Dve**) **Khandha S** (S 22.48) + SD 17.1a (3); **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59, 17-21) SD 1.2.

⁶⁶ This term is rare in the *suttas*, found only in later works, eg, **Vinaya** (V 2:29 ×2), **Buddha, vaṃsa** (B 13-15, 26), **Apadāna** (Ap 1.6, 2:587, 594), **Milinda, pañha** (Miln 285) and the comys.

⁶⁷ See *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

flowers and scent from the skies, but the personal practice of the Dharma to restrain our senses and speech, to free the mind of defilements, and wise up to the impermanent nature of all things—in short, to keep the precept, be mindful and meditate, and cultivate wisdom through learning and seeing. Practising the Dharma is the “supreme worship” (*paramā pūjā*), declares the Buddha.⁶⁸

This is true faith in the Dharma. We must reflect on the significance of the Buddha placing the Dharma even above himself. Then, we will have our full and wise faith in the Dharma, even after his passing—for, the Buddha as the teacher is in the Dharma: that is why it is called the Buddha Dhamma.

4.1.3 “Neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful in the sangha” [§17]

4.1.3.1 The **sangha** (*saṅgha*) here is the third of the 3 jewels—this is the noble sangha (*ariya, saṅgha*) or community of noble individuals (*ariya, puggala*). It is not the conventional sangha (*sammuti, saṅgha*) of monks and nuns who have taken up the training to work for awakening in this life or should be doing so. Even in the case of the conventional sangha, we should not be misled by the external appearances or status or titles or attainments of its members.

The respect we show to such conventional monastics is, firstly, a reminder of their avowed task of working for awakening in this life itself. Secondly, we respect them for their moral virtue, well trained mind and compassionate wisdom. If they should renege on their avowed spiritual task or be slack in their 3 trainings, then, it is not proper to show them any respect, but just to ignore them.

Otherwise, we may well end up having blind faith to those who are only parasiting on our faith and gullibility. We become a part of the conditions that will surely bring about the Dharma-ending age for us.⁶⁹ This Dharma-ending age may not be a world-wide or society-wide phenomenon, but it will affect us personally: it’s like being blinded by light. What should be showing us the way, is instead misguiding us and leaving us in karmically precarious situations.

4.1.3.2 There are at least two important ways of having **wise faith in the sangha**. *The first* is that of recollecting of the sangha (*saṅghānussati*), mindfully recalling the struggles and spirituality of the great saints, especially the arhats, of the Buddha’s time. Through the lives and teachings of these noble saints, we can widen and deepen our experience and understanding of the Dharma.

The second way of having wise faith in the sangha is to emulate the good examples set by these great and noble saints. If we hear the call of **renunciation**, and are independent enough to heed it, then we should find a good teacher or monastery to prepare us for such a life. The most crucial time for our us as renunciants are the first 5 years of tutelage (*nissaya*), the time and experience that actually makes us a monk or a nun in terms of our personality, not just the robes and appearances.

4.1.3.3 As monastics, our avowed task is to work for awakening in this life itself. Hence, if we plan to be a well-educated monastic, it is only proper to complete our university education as a lay person first, and then renounce when we have graduated and are ready. A monk with a career—any kind of job with wages, or dealings with money—is a contradiction in terms, with serious karmic consequences.

If we diligently commit ourself to monastic training and live in a reclusive contemplative ambience, we are likely to be able to attain arhathood or non-returning in this life itself, if not, at the moment of passing away. Otherwise, our efforts are never wasted, since they form the karmic basis to expedite our spiritual efforts in the next or subsequent life.

4.1.3.4 If, for any reason, we think that it is difficult, even impossible, to attain arhathood or non-returning in this life, then we should aspire to **streamwinning**. In fact, this is the minimum that we as avowed Buddhists, monastic or lay, should aspire to. Our main preparatory practices are diligently keep-

⁶⁸ **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,5.3.2) + SD 9 (7.2).

⁶⁹ On false monastics, see **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,8) SD 1.9; **Dh 307** SD 19.1(6.3); SD 49.3a(2.1.3); SD 28.9b. See also **Dharma-ending age**, SD 1.10.

ing the precepts (at least the 5 precepts), and keeping oneself mindful, if possible (but not necessary) with deep meditation. Our key mindfulness in our aspiration to streamwinning is **the perception of impermanence** (*anicca,saññā*).⁷⁰ A streamwinner is said to have the qualities of wise faith in the 3 jewels, and a moral life that is praised by the noble saints.⁷¹

4.1.4 “Neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful in the training” [§18]

4.1.4.1 To have faith in **the training** means, firstly, that we understand or accept the fact that our problems are not really “out there,” but really “in here” (in our mind or heart). We can try to solve every problem that hits us, but there seems to be no end to it. This is a “symptomatic” cure—curing only the symptoms, but not the whole problem.

Looking at the problem “in here” means we seek to understand how our mind words and how conditions work to make things happen. We seek to understand how we conceive things (how we construct realities out of like, dislike, delusion and fear)⁷² and perceive them (how we project our biases onto external events).

4.1.4.2 Like it or not, we create situations with what we **say, do or think**.⁷³ Normally, we are able to deal with such situations, even enjoy doing so. But, in time, such situations become problematic for various reasons, so that we have difficulties dealing with them. Even just thinking about them becomes problematic.

This means that what we say, do or think, have consequences, and we are, if we act deliberately (with intent), we are accountable for our actions. Often enough, even when we do not act deliberately (such as when we act without intent or *not consciously*), bad consequences can still follow. In this latter case, although we are not responsible for *unintentional* acts, we are still karmically responsible for our unconscious acts (such as habitual killing by a hunter or fisherman).⁷⁴

4.1.4.3 The point is that we can prevent conscious negative actions or minimize the negative effects of our unconscious actions by being mindful. **To be mindful** means that we can well restrain our 3 doors of action: we are in good control of our speech, actions and thoughts.

Taking charge of our **speech** means avoiding wrong speech (lying, slander, harsh speech and idle chatter) and practising right speech (speech that is truthful, unifying, friendly and useful).⁷⁵ Here, “speech” includes any kind of communication written (letters, books, etc), digital, or any form of communication, including being silent when such silence can cause harm or suffering to others.⁷⁶

4.1.4.4 The 5 precepts (*pañca,sīla*) comprises five voluntary abstinences—those against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and drunkenness and addiction.⁷⁷ These are wrong acts, when habitually committed, not only bring us bad karma, but also prevents us from mental cultivation. One of the key reasons for this is that when our mind starts to be calm, we begin to recall these wrong acts and feel guilty

⁷⁰ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

⁷¹ These are the 4 limbs of a streamwinner (*sotāpanassa aṅga*) (**Tad-ah’**) **Uposatha S** (A 3.70,4-7), SD 4.18; **Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1** (S 12.41,10-14), SD 3.3(4.2).

⁷² These are the 4 biases (*agati*): **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,4+5) SD 4.1 called “4 motives” (*thāna*); **Agati S 1** (A 4.17) SD 89.7; **Saṅgha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6/4/1/3).

⁷³ These are the 3 karmic doors (*dvāra*): see SD 5.7 (2.2.2).

⁷⁴ In essence, this is how karma works. For details, see **Karma**, SD 18.1. On unconscious karma, see **(Kamma,-vāda) Bhūmija S** (S 12.25), SD 31.2.

⁷⁵ On wrong speech (*micchā,vācā*) and right speech (*sammā,vācā*), see SD 10.16 (3).

⁷⁶ On “wrong silence,” see SD 44.1 (1.2.1.9).

⁷⁷ On the 5 precepts (*pañca,sīla*), see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7) SD 1.5 (1+2) the golden rule; **Sīlānussati**, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

or troubled by them. “Restlessness and guilt” (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*) are of one of the 5 mental hindrances to meditative focus and progress.⁷⁸

Moral virtue, then, is a vital foundation for effective meditation and mental cultivation. The 5 precepts act as reminders to us not to abstain from five common very negative bad karmic habits. They are preventives or deterrents to bad karma of body and speech. When we keep our precepts well, we are said to be “bodily cultivated” (*bhāvita, kāya*). They are, in short, the 5 criteria of quality control in our personal and social life.⁷⁹

4.1.4.5 To have **faith in the precepts** means to understand how they work, and to keep to them with lovingkindness. Without lovingkindness, we are merely following rules as a ritual, which may make us self-righteous and conceited, instead of working to overcome self-centredness. For, to live a moral life means that we unconditionally acknowledge the existence, lives and happiness of others. Just as we love life and want to be happy, so do other living beings, too. This is the golden rule.⁸⁰

4.1.4.7 When we keep the precepts joyfully with lovingkindness, we develop our body into a vehicle of a mind of calm and clarity. A cultivated body is the ground for a cultivated mind: a healthy body supports a healthy mind. **Meditation** (*bhāvanā*)⁸¹ begins here, but it must leave the body and its senses—the doors to the world—behind. The mind must stand on its own, and look at itself, into itself, to see that calm and clarity.

Faith in meditation means that we keep our mind free from intoxicants and addictives, free from thoughts and views—like a clear mirror that reflects our image just as we are. We begin to see ourself just as we are. This self-knowledge is the door to further self-discovery, self-understanding, ending in self-liberation. The “self” here is none other than the mind itself. The mind that is liberated from the “self” is a profoundly radiant, beautiful and wise mind.

4.1.4.7 Wisdom means doing the right thing with knowledge so that we deepen the mind’s calm and clarity into beauty and truth of our life and the world. This is essentially what the training in wisdom is about. **Faith in wisdom** means the courage to look at the world calmly and clearly right in the eye to see it for what it really is—impermanent, changing, become other. This is the beautiful truth that frees us from the world so that we can take the first step on the path of awakening.

4.1.5 “Neither angry nor displeased with fellow brahmafaraers, his heart untroubled, not unfeeling” [§19]

4.1.5.1 A “**brahmafaraer**” (*brahma, cārī*) is a monastic (a monk or a nun) who has openly declared (through the ordination ceremony) that he (which includes she) is willing and able to restrain the body for the sake of mental cultivation to diligently work for awakening in this life itself—if not, at least, for a vision of that path as a streamwinner.

Brahma, cariya means “holy life,” a Brahmā-like life, the true renunciant monastic life—a life that rises above all the pleasures of the body, especially sex, and what feeds that body in and to the world, especially wealth and money. This is a spiritual life that we freely choose so that we will be truly free of the world and awaken in this life itself.

4.1.5.2 The *Cūḷa Go, siṅga Sutta* (M 31) is a beautiful discourse on **the ideal fellowship** of true brahmafaraers—exemplified by the monks Anuruddha, Nandiya and Kimbila—who, despite living together in silent retreat, are able to communicate with one another whenever the needed to. In the Buddha’s words, they are described as “**all dwelling in concord, in mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and**

⁷⁸ On “restlessness and guilt,” see SD 32.7 (2.1), esp (2.1.4).

⁷⁹ See *Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja S* (S 35.127,7), SD 27.61.

⁸⁰ *Veḷu, dvāreyya S* (S 55.7) @ SD 1.5 (1).

⁸¹ On meditation, see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1.

water, looking at each other with kindly eyes.” Furthermore, they dwell together with lovingkindness in deed, speech and mind. They would “put aside their own mind” and subject themselves to their mind of their colleagues. Their constant state of mind is that “we may be of different bodies, but we’re of one mind!”⁸²

4.1.5.3 The brahmafārers are “**neither angry nor displeased with fellow brahmafārers**” because of their Dharma practice and keeping to the Vinaya. They are all guided by the common purpose of inner peace and a vision of the path of awakening. Their minds are “**untroubled**” because of the joyful peace they enjoy through their meditation, especially by way of breath meditation [3.3.4.2]. Their hearts are “**not unfeeling**” because they are filled with the divine abodes of lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. [4.2]

4.1.5.4 Renunciants have **faith in their fellow brahmafārers** because of their Dharma practice and the Vinaya, both of which makes the community a spiritual family headed by the Buddha himself. It is this kind of *familiarity, confidence, trust and closeness (vissāsa)* that make the noble sangha a true family, so that its members live together mingling warmly like relatives—“the trusty are the best relatives,” *vissāsa, paramā ñātī* (Dh 204).

In other words, the members of the noble sangha all have faith in one another, and this quality is often well emulated by the conventional sangha members, too. We, too, should emulate this common faith so that our society is truly a spiritual community, and wherever we meet another Buddhist, we feel a deep sense of faith and love in one another.

4.2 MENTAL BONDAGES

A “**mental bondage**” refers to the “way of the heart,” how we habitually feel about things, the things in life that attract and distract us, and divert us from personal growth and spiritual development. Psychologically, this is to have an unwholesome view of being and having. Instead of actually experiencing people and things in wholesome ways, we view them as what is to be measured (comparing self with others) and collected (numbers mattering more than the moment). In short, we do not really know how to enjoy life.

The 5 mental bondages (cetaso vinibandha) [3.3] are those of lust for sensual pleasures, for our own body and for external forms, indulgence in food and sleep, and aspiration for heavenly rebirth. These are **the affective aspects** of the struggle in our spiritual life, that we need love, ruth, joy and peace⁸³ in our lives for sure progress on the path of awakening [3.2.2.2]. Here, we shall examine the overcoming and prevention of these mental bondages in terms of Dharma training and awakening.

4.2.1 Overcoming lust for sensual pleasures [§20]

4.2.1.1 The Sutta’s commentary explains that “sensual pleasure” here connotes both the objects of sense-desire (*vatthu, kāma*) as well as sensual desire for them as a defilement (*kilesa, kāma*) (MA 2:69,5). The “objects of sense-desire” refers to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts that are the potential bases for attracting us, grasping us and so intensifying the defilements that initiated the process. It is the sensual desire here that we have to be more wary of and avoid.

An enlightening passage from **the Nibbedhika Pariyāya Sutta** teaches us that sensual objects are not bad in themselves; it is our intentions towards them that decides whether they are unwholesome or wholesome:

⁸² M 31,6-7/1:206 (SD 44.11).

⁸³ These are the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*): *mettā, karuṇā, muditā* and *upekkhā*, see **Brahma, vihāra**, SD 38.5.

*Saṅkappa, rāgo purisassa kāmo
n'ete kāmā yāni citrāni loke
saṅkappa, rāgo purisassa kāmo
tiṭṭhanti citrāni tath'eva loke
ath'ettha dhīrā vinayanti chandan ti*

The thought of passion⁸⁴ is a person's sensuality:⁸⁵
there is no sensuality in what are beautiful in the world.
The thought of passion is a person's sensuality:
The alluringly diverse⁸⁶ in the world remain just as they are.
So here the wise remove desire (for them).⁸⁷

(A 6.63,3.4) SD 6.11⁸⁸

4.2.1.2 The reason why we are caught up in running after sensual pleasure is that we do not understand the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes and touches. When we are attracted to them, we do not realize that it is often a knee-jerk response, an instinctive reactivity, to something familiar, a past pleasant experience.

It's like we have been jilted in our first love—or imagine that we have been jilted—and now fear being jilted again or being unloved, and will have nothing to do with men or women (depending on the situation). Then, we redirect our attention—often by psychological transference or by displacement⁸⁹—to some perceptibly self-affirming project (such as making money or religious zeal).

4.2.1.3 Sensual pleasures—which includes the emotions attending them (basically the 4 biases of lust, hate, delusion and fear) [4.1.4.1]—are **conditioned states**. They are our hedonic responses to how we perceive other people in terms of the 5 physical experiences of others [4.2.2.3]. There is no “person” that we are attracted to, or lust after, or in love with, or who does not requite our advances, or who jilts us. They are merely conditions that we see or seek, and they are perceived as being unsatisfactory. There is no person—neither “I” or the “other”—to be blamed. If any is to be blamed, it is the conditions (*paccaya*).

4.2.2 Overcoming lust for the body [§21]

4.2.2.1 Our body comprises the 5 physical senses and the mind. These **6 senses** (*saḷ-āyatana*) and their respective sense-objects (*dhamma*) are only unwholesome when we root them in lust, hate or delusion. If we simply notice them as they arise and fall away, then, we really enjoy them in the sense that we feel the joy and peace of reality that they are impermanent, and we cannot even try to hold them back. Just let them come, let them go; see their nature of rising and falling—the *truth* is in their impermanence, the *beauty* is in the fact that we actually see this ourself.

4.2.2.2 When we are attached to our body, we begin to imagine it, in part or as a whole—our form, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness⁹⁰—to be actually enduring or permanent, imagining that

⁸⁴ On *saṅkappa, rāga*, “thought of lust” or “lustful intention,” see S:B 366 n72.

⁸⁵ *Saṅkappa, rāgo purisassa kāmo*. Be Ce Ee Se all give the same 5-line stanza. It recurs in **Na Santi S** (S 1.34), SD 42.6 without line a. Here [§3.4] the stress is in our own thinking or intention, while in S 1.34, it is on the nature of the world. Note how lines a flows into b, and lines c into d. Line e points to what should be done.

⁸⁶ “Beautiful,” *citra*, has a broad range of meanings: **1** (mfn) (i) bright, bright-coloured, decorated, many-coloured; extraordinary, wonderful; (ii) variegated, speckled; (iii) various, different, manifold. **2** (n) a kind of bird (the speckled cuckoo?). **3** (n) (i) something brilliant or diverse or extraordinary; (ii) a painting, a picture. See DP for details.

⁸⁷ This verse, which explains the previous prose sentence, “plays upon the double meaning of *kāma*, emphasizes that purification is to be achieved by mastering the defilement of sensuality, not by fleeing [from] sensually enticing objects.” (A:ÑB 1999:302 n34)

⁸⁸ This verse closely parallels a verse in S 104 in **Na Santi S** (S 1.34,6/1:22), SD 42.6, which omits line a, and reading *na te for n'ete*; this **A 6.63** verse is qu at Kvu 370; NmA 1:12. Comys however qu the verse **S 104**: SA 1:63×2, which attr it to comy on **Pasūra S**, Sn 830 (or one of its verses): SnA 2:539; AA 2:41. Cf Tha 674.

⁸⁹ On transference and the defence mechanism of displacement, see SD 17.8c (8.4.1.1).

⁹⁰ These are the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*): see SD 17, esp SD 17.1a.

“This is *mine!*” (craving), “This I *am!*” (conceit), and “This is *my self!*” (self-view).⁹¹ These are the 3 pernicious self-views.⁹² As unawakened beings, we are more likely to be attracted and attached to our **body**, that is, our 5 physical senses: the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body.

In other words, we see ourself only in part, not as a whole: we only see ourself as how we look, or how we sound, or how we smell, or how we taste (in the sense of pleasure as well as indulging in food), or how we feel (to the touch). When we indulge in such sensual attachments, failing to appreciate their true nature of being impermanent and unsatisfying, we sink into a subhuman level of violently seeking them (asura), or craving for them (animal), or being addicted to them (preta), or simply suffering on account of them (hell-beings).

4.2.2.3 It helps to constantly reflect the true nature of our **human body**, as taught in **the Sāmañña-phala Sutta** (D 2), thus:

“This body of mine is form
 composed of the 4 great elements,⁹³ born from mother and father.
 He understands thus:
 It is nourished with rice and porridge,
 subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, and dispersion.⁹⁴
 And this consciousness of mine lies attached here, bound up here.”⁹⁵ (D 2,85.2), SD 8.10

When we habitually see our body in this way, we understand that what we see as its life, youth or health are all limited in time. From the day we are born, we start to decay—we give nice-sounding words to those preferable stages: infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood; then, the words are not so inviting: middle age, maturity, senility, second childhood. Buddhaghosa, in his **Visuddhi,magga**, mentions these “10 stages of life,” lasting roughly 10 years each, that is, those of the tender decade, the sport decade, the beauty decade, the strength decade, the understanding decade, the decline decade, the stooping decade, the bent decade, the dotage decade, and the prone decade.⁹⁶

4.2.2.4 Despite our body (with our mind) being fleeting and frail, it is our only vehicle for awakening. We start by understanding and accepting the impermanent and imperfect nature of **our physical body**. We let it go so that we do not, at least for a time, have to process any of the 5 physical sense-data. Then, we can turn all our attention to examining the nature of the mind.

We notice that **the mind**, too, is impermanent, changing, becoming other. We can notice this reality in our breath, too, even more clearly so. The breath, after all, is the interaction between the body and the mind. When we faithfully watch the rise and fall of the breath, and how it becomes peaceful and blissful, It becomes the door to inner calm and clarity. We are then free of all desires and defilements on attachment to passing fancies. We enjoy the joyful and liberating experience of true reality.

⁹¹ Respectively see **I: The nature of identity**, SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a; **Mine: The nature of craving**, SD 19.3.

⁹² See SD 19.11 (1.1).

⁹³ The 4 great (or primary) elements (*mahā,bhūtā*): earth, water, fire, wind, ie, essentially, solid and resistance, liquid and cohesiveness, heat and decay, and air and movement (D 1:214; Vism 11.27; Abhs 154): **Rūpa**, SD 17.2a.

⁹⁴ See **Vammika S** (M 23,4/1:144), SD 28.13 for parable of the anthill (representing the body).

⁹⁵ **D 2,85/1:76** (×2) = **M 109,9/2:17**; **M 23,4/1:144**, **74,9/500**; **S 35.105/4:83** = **A 9.15,2/4:386**; **S 55.21/5:369 f**; **Nigrodha,miga J 12/1:146**. Cf Divy 180: *śatana,patana,vikirāṇa, vidhvāṃsanā,dharmatā*. See **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74.9/1:500), SD 16.1 tr & nn. This statement means that consciousness here (in a physical being) is dependent on the physical body. RD points out that this and other passages disprove the idea that the (same) consciousness (*viññāṇa*) transmigrates. For holding such a view, Sāti was severely rebuked by the Buddha (M 38). A new re-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi*) arises at conception, dependent on the old one (see Vism 17.164 ff).

⁹⁶ Vism 20.51 & SD 48.1 (5/3/1/2).

4.2.3 Overcoming lust for form [§22]

4.2.3.1 Even when we have learned to accept our body as it is, and are not attracted to it, we may, on the other hand, be attracted to external forms, especially the bodies of other. What we miss or see as missing from our body, we try to look for it in others. Here again, we see others as only in parts: the physical structure that we lust for—the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body.

When we objectify people in this way, we also start measuring them. To “measure” means to compare self with others, and one with another, and to be drawn to what we see as lacking in us, and to reject what we see as not attractive or preventing us from our quest for pleasure.

We see a person, an experience or a thing as an object of pleasure, we want to have it. When we already have it, we want more, we seek new ones, and so we collect such objects. This becomes our unending samsaric quest—like the mythical Sisyphus pushing his rock uphill, it rolls down, and he runs after it downhill, and pushes it uphill again, ad infinitum. He seems to enjoy it! We are caught in this samsaric cycle either because we think we enjoy running after the rock (it gives us a false sense of achievement) or we are tired of the rock, and so we look for a new one to push uphill and run downhill after.

4.2.3.2 We can imagine forms (*rūpa*) here as a catchword for all our physical sense-experiences, all the physical sense-objects we see as attractive or not. Remember the quote from **the Nibbedhika Pariyāya Sutta** (A 6.63), where the Buddha states that things out there do not have any sensual quality: we perceive such a quality in them [4.2.1.1]. A “form,” then, is an external sense-object onto which we project our lust, hate or delusion.

The mind behind the projecting only sees parts of wholes, those parts that attract us, and we reject the rest. A relationship that is based on such partial or “biased” love clearly will not work. It does not help to only love a person’s eyes, or ears, or nose, or tongue, or body-parts (muscles, bones, etc). The problem with parts is that they cannot function on their own; even their existence depends on other parts. In other words, theirs is a conditioned existence: they change, they are unsatisfactory, they do not exist in themselves.

If we lust for only a part of a person, when that part changes or begins to appear different from our expectations, then, we lose interest. We are now really in love, but in lust (treating people as objects and body-parts). We need to accept people completely and unconditionally—this is **lovingkindness**, the basis of a wholesome relationship with others.⁹⁷

4.2.4 Overcoming indulgence in food and sleep [§23]

4.2.4.1 The most common symptoms of sensual person—one who is easily attracted by sense-objects that are perceived as being attractive or distracted by their opposites—are the indulgence in food (overeating and drinking) and sleep or a leisurely life of pleasure and abandon. For renunciants, who have avowedly live a life of simplicity and restraint dedicated to moral virtue, contemplation and wisdom, clearly indulgence in food and sleep do not conduce to spiritual growth.

4.2.4.2 Since the true renunciant life eschews any economic pursuits and physical work—dedicated to personal growth, mental development and spiritual awakening—the renunciant needs only minimal food and support. Hence, a renunciant, as a rule, needs only one main meal a day (between dawn and noon), simple monastic robes, spartan lodgings and basic medicine and health care.⁹⁸ These are donated by lay-supporters out of faith for the diligent renunciant living a minimalist life of spiritual quest.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Further on lovingkindness in relationship, see SD 38.4 (7).

⁹⁸ These are the 4 supports (*catu, paccaya*): see **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,13-16), SD 30.3; **Santuṭṭhi S** (A 4.27), SD 104.8.

⁹⁹ On the ignoble quest and the noble quest, see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,5-12) SD 1.11; **(Catukka) Pariyesanā S** (A 4:252), SD 50.9.

4.2.4.3 A life of indulgence in food and sleep, or pursuing a monastic life for the sake of creature comforts, or making a career of monkhood, is to blatantly abuse the path of world renunciation. Hence, it is a downward slide into subhuman states, even in this life itself. Although we have human body, our mind is turning more in a subhuman devolution. When the human body reaches its end, we will be reborn in accordance with our habitual mind.

4.2.4.4 To have faith in the life of **Dharma-spirited renunciation** is to diligently work in letting go of any residual layman conduct or mindset, to abandon any attachment to the world, and to restrain our body and speech to become the bases for mental cultivation for inner calm and clarity. The joyful calm and clear mind is then directed to clearing the mind of all hindrances¹⁰⁰ and defilements,¹⁰¹ so that we see the path of awakening. We are now ready to take the first steps on this liberating path to nirvana.

4.2.5 Overcoming the desire for heaven and external agency [§24]

4.2.5.1 Even in the Buddha’s time, there were those who claimed to have found answers to the sufferings and unsatisfactoriness of the world, or who claimed they were the way to heaven and to God. Amongst them, there were a few “true” teachers, but most of them were false ones. The “true” teachers were those who were deep meditators, including the eternalists, those who thought that the self and the world were eternal because, through their meditations, they were able to recall up to 100,000 past lives, and up to 40 world cycles, but no more, as stated in **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1).¹⁰²

The false teachers were those who came up with their own views about the eternity of the self and the universe through reasoning or speculation.¹⁰³ Through such experiences and speculations, these ancient Indian sages taught various ideologies and theologies about some eternal self and eternal God, and recorded these in their sacred texts. Understanding that such texts were only religious sources of doctrines, but not valid sources of empirical or verifiable knowledge, the Buddha unequivocally rejects them—along with other invalid sources of true knowledge—as he famously declares in the “10 doubtful points” (*kaṅkhāniya-ṭṭhāna*) in such discourses as **the Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65), thus:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) Do not go ¹⁰⁴ by tradition [aural revelation]. ¹⁰⁵ | <i>mā anussavena</i> |
| (2) Do not go by lineage [received wisdom]. | <i>mā paramparāya</i> |
| (3) Do not go by hearsay. | <i>mā iti,kirāya</i> |
| (4) Do not go by scriptural authority. | <i>mā piṭaka,sampadānena</i> |
| (5) Do not go by pure reason [by logic]. | <i>mā takka,hetu[,gāhena]</i> |
| (6) Do not go by inference (and deduction). | <i>mā naya,hetu[,gāhena]</i> |
| (7) Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning]. | <i>mā ākāra,parivitakkena</i> |
| (8) Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of]
a view after pondering on it. | <i>mā diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā</i> |
| (9) Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability. | <i>mā bhavya,rūpatāya</i> |
| (10) Do not go by the thought, ‘This recluse [holy man] is
our teacher.’ [‘This recluse is respected by us.’] | <i>mā samaṇo no garū ti</i>
(A 3.65,3.1), SD 35.4a |

¹⁰⁰ These are the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*), the overcoming of which brings dhyana [3.3.4.2].

¹⁰¹ These are the 10 mental fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*): see SD 40a.1 (15.4.4) n; SD 49.14 Table2. For details, see SD 10.16 (1.6.6).

¹⁰² D 1,31-33 (SD 25.2).

¹⁰³ D 1,34 (SD 25.3).

¹⁰⁴ Comy interprets as *mā ganhiṭṭha*, “Do not take hold of (a notion)” throughout (AA 2:305).

¹⁰⁵ Here, “tradition” includes revelations, prophecies and so on,

4.2.5.2 Buddhists—especially monastics—who aspire for heaven or some kind of paradise (Buddhist or otherwise) obviously do not understand the historical Buddha’s teaching on samsara and the 3 trainings [4.1.2.2], or they reject his teachings. Either way, they will never taste the freedom of the Dharma. Even the heavens of the traditional Buddhist cosmology are not eternal places. Such eternal places are simply inventions by dogmatic religions to “reward” their faithful with eternal heavens, and to “punish” those who reject or disobey them with eternal hells. There are no such *eternal places* for the simple reason that whatever exist must exist in time: they are all impermanent.

In early Buddhist teachings, the heavens and the hells are described as mythical realities. Whether these gods and subhuman beings exist or not, it is clear that their existences refer to **mental states** of prolonged joy or prolonged suffering. No matter how long such states may last, they are never eternal. In fact, according to **the (Nānā,karaṇa) Puggala Sutta 1** (A 4.123), even the gods, when the effects of their good karma end, they fall straight into the hellish states!¹⁰⁶ The heavens are merely a long-winded way to the hells—unless we have attained the path as streamwinners and so on. Then, because of the nature of our minds and karma, we will never fall into the subhuman states.¹⁰⁷

4.2.5.3 Buddhist practitioners who understand and accept the Buddha’s teaching of **self-reliance** and the 3 trainings [4.1.2.2] will reject rituals and vows, or any kind of reliance of external agency for spiritual salvation. Certain rituals, like bowing before the Buddha or puja (worship services) may, however, be helpful for fostering fellowship and reminders of certain Buddhist teachings—if we do such ritual with wisdom and focus. For example, we recollect the Buddha’s virtues as we bow, or we make an effort to understand what we are chanting, and to reflect on them. In other words, all our 3 doors of actions are involved in a common wholesome gesture, such as reflecting on moral virtue or on impermanence. This is our faith in self-reliance.

4.2.5.4 **The Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65) [4.2.5.1] closes with four important teachings: the disadvantages of doing bad, the advantages of doing good, practice of the divine abodes, and the 4 self-assurances. These teaching fitting close our section on an analysis of the 5 barrennesses and 5 bondages, with a clear vision of Dharma practice following the Buddha’s teaching.

After listing the 10 well known doubtful points [4.2.5.1], the Buddha goes on to instruct us to carefully examine the disadvantages of unwholesome actions—which arise through the 3 unwholesome roots: through *greed, hate or delusion*, we are moved to kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct or lie. Such actions are not only unwholesome, but are also blamable (most people see no good in them) and censured by the wise (those who understand the human nature and goodness will reject them, too). “These things ... fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.” (A 3.65)¹⁰⁸

4.2.5.5 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta then goes on to state the advantages of wholesome actions—which arise through the 3 wholesome roots: through *non-greed, non-hate or non-delusion*, we are moved not to break the precepts. Such actions are not only wholesome, but are also *not* blamable (most people see good in them) and praised by the wise. “These things ... fully undertaken, bring good and happiness.” (A 3,65)¹⁰⁹

The Buddha, after exhorting that we should cultivate these whole actions al our lives. Based on such a wholesome mental state, we are ready to cultivate **the 4 divine abodes**—which can also be called the 4 social emotions—because they conduce to fellowship as well as happiness here and now. In other words, they act as catalysts in our self-efforts in preparing us to walk the path. (A 3.65)¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ A 4.123 (SD 23.8a).

¹⁰⁷ See any of the 10 suttas of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25), such as (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

¹⁰⁸ A 3.65,3-6 (SD 35.4a).

¹⁰⁹ A 3.65,10-13 (SD 35.4a).

¹¹⁰ A 3.65,15 (SD 34.4a).

4.2.5.6 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta (A 3.65), in its concluding instructions, teach us the 4 self-assurances or spiritual solaces (*assāsa*). The Buddha encourages us to at least accept the teachings of **karma and rebirth** as basic but provisional truths—or working truths or guiding principles—to guide our social lives and attitudes.

The Buddha wagers with us, as it were, that it is better to be good than otherwise. **The Buddha's wager** is like this. If karma and rebirth (the afterlife) are true—and we accept them as our life's guides—then, we will have a good rebirth. If they are false, we will still be happy here and now.

Secondly, the Buddha encourages us to accept that good and bad are real (they exist). If we accept this and live by it, and they are real; then, we face no bad karmic fruit. If there is neither good or bad (they do not exist), then, we remain pure and unaffected anyway. Both ways, we win the wager. So why not accept karma and rebirth, and reject bad and cultivate good.¹¹¹

The Buddha's wager is that we have every benefit of the doubt if we accept living a morally good life here and now, without the need of hoping for some heaven or paradise, and not to resort to any external agency, but to take the self as refuge. For, it is in our own self, our mind, that good arises, and it is here that we must diligently work for personal growth and spiritual liberation. This is the essence of spiritual self-reliance.

4.3 BENEFITS OF OVERCOMING THE BARRENNESSES AND BONDAGES

4.3.1 Hindrances to spiritual growth

The (Majjhima) Ceto,khila Sutta (M 16) states that mental barrenness and mental bondage prevent us from growing spiritually. When we are mentally “barren” and “bound,” we will not attain “growth, increase, abundance” (*vuddhim virūḥim vepullam*) in the Dharma-Vinaya [§2]. This means that these impediments will prevent our growth in the Dharma and discipline in the Vinaya—in other words, we are impeded from any kind of progress on the path of awakening.

According to the Sutta commentary, these three terms refer respectively to moral virtue (and the 3 trainings), the path and nirvana (MA 2:68,6). In simple terms, mental barrenness and bondage prevent us from growing spiritual to awaken to nirvana. Only when we have abandoned mental barrenness [4.3.1.2] and cut off mental bondage [4.3.1.3] are we able to progress on the path of awakening to attain, in due course, nirvana [§2].

The presence of any of the barrennesses or bondages, it is stated, will prevent us from any kind of “ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving” (*ātappāya anuyogāya sātaccāya padhānāya*). That is to say, we will not devote ourselves to constantly and diligently to the effort of destroying our mental defilements [§3.2 + n]. These 10 negative qualities impede all our wholesome qualities and promote our negative ones thus preventing us from any effective spiritual effort. Hence, we need to urgently and habitually overcome them.

4.3.2 Spiritual progress

4.3.2.1 With wise faith in the 3 jewels and the training, and warm fellowship with our spiritual colleagues, we *abandon* all mental barrenness, and tend to “ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving” in the Dharma-Vinaya. Our mind is fully equipped with the **cognitive** knowledge and skills that help us keep the precepts, meditate and cultivate wisdom. Such an empowered mind is calm and clear, pervaded with the joyful interest to see true reality as they arise before us.

4.3.2.2 When we understand the nature of sensual lust, we are *not distracted* by sensual pleasures, the body, form, indulgence in food and sleep, or misconstruing the holy life as a means to attain heavenly rebirth. Hence, we are able to *cut off* all mental bondage, and tend to “ardour, devotion, perseverance,

¹¹¹ A 3.65,17-18 + SD 35.4a, esp on the 4 self-assurances (7.2). See also SD 51.5 (5.1.3.7) diagram.

striving” in the Dharma-Vinaya. We are fully prepared with the **affective** knowledge and skills that inspire us in our moral training, meditation and wisdom cultivation. With sensual lust out of the way, we can easily meditate and attain dhyana to gain the mental calm and clarity for a liberating vision of true reality.

4.3.3 Progress and success

4.3.3.1 The (Majjhima) Ceto,khila Sutta ends by stating how we are now able to cultivate **the 4 bases of success** (*iddhi,pāda*) “for the accomplishment of effort and concentration”—that is, a high-powered meditation encompassing both dhyana and its uses [§26]. We start with **zeal** (*chanda*), which encompasses our desire, will and enthusiasm to work for the path. This zeal generates the **energy** that powers our practice so that it is fully directed to attaining the path or at least head that way.

This energy focuses and readies the **mind** (*citta*) to be completely calm and clear. With such a calm and clarity, we are able to execute a truly effective and beneficial **investigation** of mental states and realities that confront us. We are now ever nearer that path than ever before.

4.3.3.2 The Sutta mentions a 5th “base,” as it were—that of **exertion** (*ussolhī*). This refers to an underlying and unifying dynamism in all the 4 bases of success. Hence, effectively have a total of **5 bases of success**, which along with the **abandoning** of the 5 mental barrennesses and the **cutting off** of the 5 mental bondages, total 15 factors. We are now ready for “breakthrough,” that is, gain streamwinning—the first real step on the path of awakening. We are ready and sure of awakening (free of new karma and mental suffering) and of nirvana (free of rebirth).

The Sutta finally ends with the famous **parable of the hatchlings** [§§28-30] which highlights how these 15 factors work on their own momentum to push us on to breakthrough, awakening and nirvana. This parable, technically, refers to “undirected” meditation,¹¹² where having lived the Dharma and meditated, we now simply let mind blossom, as it were, and awaken, but its own course. It means that even the Buddha does nothing for us now, needs to do nothing for us: we have ourself done what needs to be done—the Dharma will work its own way without any outside help to awaken us.

— — —

The Discourse on Mental Barrenness

M 16

1 [101] Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park monastery in Jeta’s grove¹¹³ outside Sāvattihī.¹¹⁴

There, the Blessed One addressed the monks thus, “Bhikshus!”

“Bhante!” the monks answered the Blessed One in assent.

¹¹² On undirect meditation, see SD **Bhikkhuṇi Vāsaka S** (S 47.10) + SD 24.2 (1).

¹¹³ *Jeta,vana*, so called, says Comy, because it is “grown, maintained and guarded by prince Jeta” (*tañ hi jetena rāja,kumārena ropitam samvaddhitam paripālitam*) (MA 1:60; KhpA 111; PmA 3:533). As such, it is not an ordinary wild forest, but a cultivated grove.

¹¹⁴ On tr *sāvattihīyam* as “near (*samīpe*) Sāvattihī,” rather than “*in* Sāvattihī,” see Comys, eg SA 1:13; AA 1:15; KhpA 112; UA 57; PmA 3:534.

THE “UNABANDONED” (NEGATIVE) CYCLE

The Blessed One said this:

2 “Indeed, bhikshus, that any monk who has not abandoned **his 5 mental barrenness**, not cut off **his 5 mental bondages**, would attain growth, increase, abundance [full growth]¹¹⁵ in this Dharma-Vinaya [Dharma-Vinaya]—this is impossible.¹¹⁶

The 5 mental barrennesses (*ceto,khila*)

3 What are his 5 mental barrennesses that have not been abandoned?¹¹⁷

(1) Here, bhikshus, a monk is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in **the teacher**.¹¹⁸

3.2 Any monk, bhikshus, *who is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in the teacher*, his mind does not tend to **ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving**.¹¹⁹

3.3 For one whose mind *does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving*, this is thus his **1st mental barrenness** that has *not* been abandoned.¹²⁰

4 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in **the Dharma [the teaching]**.¹²¹

4.2 Any monk, bhikshus, *who is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in the Dharma*, his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

4.3 For one whose mind *does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving*, this is thus his **2nd mental barrenness** that has *not* been abandoned.

¹¹⁵ “Growth, increase, abundance,” *vuḍḍhiṃ virūḷhiṃ vepullāṃ*, refers respectively to moral virtue (and the 3 trainings), to path, and to nirvana (MA 2:68,6). “Abundance” (*vepulla*) refers to the spiritual goal, ie, “full growth” (the progressive path) ending in nirvana.

¹¹⁶ *Yassa kassaci, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno pañca ceto,khilā appahīnā, pañca cetaso,vinibandhā* [only *Ce vinibaddhā*] *asamucchinnā, so vat’imasmiṃ dhamma,vinaye vuddhiṃ virūḷhiṃ vepullāṃ āpajjissatīti— n’etaṃ thānaṃ vijjati*. Comy says that “growth, increase, abundance” (*vuddhi virūḷhi vepulla*) refer respectively to moral virtue (*sīla*), the path (*maggā*) and nirvana; or, in moral virtue and concentration; insight and the path; and the fruitions and nirvana. (MA 2:68). On mental barrenness (*ceto,khila*), see (3.1); one mental bondage (*cetaso vinibandha*), see (3.2).

¹¹⁷ *Katama’ssa pañca ceto,khilā appahīnā honti*. I take *katamassa* as *katamā*, “what?” + *assa*, “of this (person)” (gen sg m of *ayam*, “this”), throughout.

¹¹⁸ *Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu satthari kaṅkhati vicikicchati nādhimuccati na sampasīdati*. The underscored occurs at Sn p107,16 (re 2 of the Buddha’s 32 marks); D 1:106,2 (re the Buddha’s 32 marks), D 1:109,5 f (re 2 of the 32 marks); M 1:101,10 = A 4:460,13 = 5:17,25 (in the teacher); M 2:135,8 (re the Buddha’s 32 marks).

¹¹⁹ *Yo so bhikkhave bhikkhu satthari kaṅkhati vicikicchati nādhimuccati na sampasīdati, tassa cittaṃ na namati ātappāya anuyogāya sātaccāya padhānāya*. Comy: *Ātappāya* is “for the sake of arousing effort in burning away defilements” (*kilesa,santāpaka.viriya,karaṇ’atthāya*); *anuyogāya* is “yoked to repetitive effort” (*puna-p,puna,yoga-ya*); *sātaccāya* is omitted; *padhānāya* is “for the sake of striving” (*padahana’atthāya*) (MA 2:68,19). Comy on **Saṅgīti S** (D 33) adds: *Ātappāya* means “for the sake of generating effort”; *anuyogāya*, “yoked to it over and again”; *sātaccāya*, “continued doing”; *padhānāya*, “for the sake of striving” (*Ātappāyāti viriya,karaṇ’atthāya*. *Anuyogāyāti puna-p,punaṃ yogāya*. *Sātaccāyāti satata,kiriyāya*. *Padhānāyāti padahan’atthāya*, DA 3:1030)

¹²⁰ *Evam assāyaṃ paṭhamo ceto,khilo appahīno hoti*. On having faith in the Buddha, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7.

¹²¹ Comy says that *dhamma* (Dharma) here is scriptural or theoretical teachings (*pariyatti,dhamma*) and breakthroughs into the paths, fruits and nirvana (*paṭivedha,dhamma*) (MA 2:68): on the 3 good dharmas (*saddhamma*), see **The levels of training**, SD 40a.4 esp (2); **Notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (3.4). The Dharma, it must be added, also refers to the reality discovered by the Buddha and the truth of his teaching, and the Buddha’s exhortation towards self-effort. The Dharma as training is found below [§6]. Lack of faith may induce us to turn to some form of external agency for succour and salvation, or see Buddhism as such an agency, as often seen in later Buddhisms.

5 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in **the sangha [the monastic community]**.¹²²

5.2 Any monk, bhikshus, *who is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in the sangha*, his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

5.3 For one whose mind *does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving*, this is thus his **3rd** mental barrenness that has *not* been abandoned.

6 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in **the training**.¹²³

6.2 Any monk, bhikshus, *who is doubtful, uncertain, lacking commitment, lacking faith, in the training*, his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

6.3 For one whose mind *does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving*, this is thus his **4th** mental barrenness that has *not* been abandoned.

7 (5) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is **angry and displeased with fellow brahmarers [celibate colleagues], his heart troubled, unfeeling [callous]**.¹²⁴

7.2 Any monk, bhikshus, *who is angry and displeased with fellow brahmarers, his heart troubled, unfeeling*,¹²⁵ his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

7.3 For one whose mind *does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving*, this is thus his **5th** mental barrenness that has *not* been abandoned.

These are his 5 mental barrennesses that have *not* abandoned.

The 5 mental bondages (*cetaso, vinibandha*)

8 What are his 5 mental bondages that has not been cut off?¹²⁶

8.2 (1) Here, bhikshus, a monk is not rid of lust, *not* rid of desire, *not* rid of love, *not* rid of thirst, *not* rid of fever, *not* rid of craving for **sensual pleasure**.¹²⁷

¹²² Here, *saṅgha* refers both to the noble community of saints and also to the conventional community of renunciants. In the former, it entails faith in the Vinaya rules and monastic practice; in the latter, it is the aspiration to attain the pain in this life itself. On *the sangha*, see *Saṅghānussati*, SD 15.10a.

¹²³ *Sikkhā*, ie *the training* in moral virtue (*sīla*), mental concentration (*samādhi*), and liberating wisdom (*paññā*). See n on (2) Dhamma [§4]. On *the 3 trainings*, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

¹²⁴ *Puna ca param bhikkhave bhikkhu sa, brahmacārīsu kupīto hoti anattamano āhata, citto khila, jāto*. From *kupīto* ... etc: V 3:163,30 = 4:45,2 = 236,9 = D 3:238,10 = M 1:101,23 = A 3:249,8 = 4:460,22 = 5:18,5; A 3:176,1; DhA 1:309,13. This is the kind of malicious mind that induces a monk to breach the Vinaya (V 3:163).

¹²⁵ *Sa, brahma, cārīsu kupīto anattamano āhata, citto khila, jāto*: D 3:238,10 = M 1:101,23 = A 3:249,8 = 4:460,22 = 5:18,5; A 3:176,1. A longer stock is *kupīto anattamano anabhiraddho* [“unconciliated, dissatisfied, sulky”] *āhata, citto khila, jāto*: V 3:163,30 (*paṭighena āhatam cittam assa*, “his mind troubled by anger,” VA 584,28) = 4:45,2 = 236,19; V 3:255,13, 4:236,9, 238,30. A gloss: *ananvāhata, cetaso ’ti* [“unperplexed mind”] *āhata, citto khila, jāto*, DhA 1:309,13; *jarādīmi vyāruddhe āhata, citte satte disvā*, “having seen hostile beings with minds troubled by decay and so on,” SnA 566,30 = NmA 428,7; *duṭṭha, manā ... āhata, cittā* (“a corrupt mind ... troubled heart”), Nm 62,8 (NmA 1:190,15). Opp, *anāhata, citto hoti akhila, jāto*, “an untroubled mind, feeling heart”: **Sammatta, niyāma S 3** (A 5.153), 2nd of the 5 qualities of one, listening to the Dharma, is able to attain streamwinning (A 5.153/3:176,11), SD 4.4.

¹²⁶ *Katamāssa pañca cetaso, vinibandhā asamucchinnā honti*.

¹²⁷ *Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāmē* avīta, rāgo hoti avigata-c, chando avigata, pemo avigata, pipāso avigata, pariḷāho avigata, taṅho*. **Kame*: The same line in (**Pañcaka**) **Cetaso Vinibandha S** (A 5.206,2), this reads *kāmesu*, with the same sense (SD 51.10c). Cf (**Thīna, middha**) **Tissa S** (S 22.84.9), SD 32.12 where this sequence is applied to the 5 aggregates.

8.3 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is not rid of lust, not rid of desire, not rid of love, not rid of thirst, not rid of fever, not rid of craving for sensual pleasure,*

his mind does not tend to ardour [fervent practice], devotion, perseverance, striving.

8.4 For one whose mind does *not* tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,
this is thus his **1st mental bondage** that has *not* been cut off.¹²⁸

9 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is not rid of lust, *not* rid of desire, *not* rid of love, *not* rid of thirst, *not* rid of fever, *not* rid of craving for **the body**.¹²⁹

9.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is not rid of lust, not rid of desire, not rid of love, not rid of thirst, not rid of fever, not rid of craving for the body,*

his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

9.3 For one whose mind does *not* tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,
this is thus his **2nd mental bondage** that has *not* been cut off. [102]

10 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is not rid of lust, *not* rid of desire, *not* rid of love, *not* rid of thirst, *not* rid of fever, *not* rid of craving for **form**.¹³⁰

10.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is not rid of lust, not rid of desire, not rid of love, not rid of thirst, not rid of fever, not rid of craving for form,*

his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

10.3 For one whose mind does *not* tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,
this is thus his **3rd mental bondage** that has *not* been cut off.

11 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, **a monk eats and overfills his belly and dwells indulging in the pleasures of the bed,¹³¹ of lying down, of sleeping.**¹³²

11.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who eats and overfills his belly and dwells indulging in the pleasures of the bed, of lying down, of sleeping,*

his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

11.3 For one whose mind does *not* tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,
this is thus his **4th mental bondage** that has *not* been cut off.

12 (5) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk **lives the holy life aspiring for a certain host of devas**, thus: ‘By this moral virtue [ritual]¹³³ or vow or asceticism or holy life, may I become this deva or that deva!’¹³⁴

¹²⁸ *Yassa cittaṃ na namati ātappāya anuyogāya sātaccāya padhānāya, evam assāyaṃ paṭhamo ceto, khilo appahīno hoti.*

¹²⁹ *Puna c’aparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye avīta, rāgo hoti avigata-c, chando avigata, pemo avigata, pipāso avigata, pariḷāho avigata, taṇho.* Comy: Here “the body” (*kāye*) refers to his own body (that is, in practice, *our* own body). Foll comy, I take it as locative sg, since it refers to lust and attachment towards our own body (*attano kāye*, MA 2:69,6).

¹³⁰ *Puna c’aparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhu rūpe avīta, rāgo hoti avigata-c, chando avigata, pemo avigata, pipāso avigata, pariḷāho avigata, taṇho.* Comy: Here “form” (*rūpa*) refers to external forms (*bahiddhā rūpe*), ie, visual objects, esp the bodies of others that we lust for or are attached to (MA 2:69).

¹³¹ This and next words, *seyya, sukhaṃ passa, sukhaṃ*. Cf **Seyyā S** (A 4.144/2:44), where sleep on the left side is said to be a “pleasure-lover’s sleeping posture” (*kāma.bhogī, seyyā*), SD 76.6.

¹³² *Puna ca param bhikkhave bhikkhu yāva-d-attham udarāvadehakaṃ bhuñjitvā seyya, sukhaṃ passa, sukhaṃ middha, sukhaṃ anuyutto viharati.* Comy glosses *middha* as *niddā* (sleep) (MA 2:69): see **Thīna, middha**, SD 32.6 (2.2). **Udarāvadehakaṃ** = *udara*, “belly” + *avadehaka* (*ava*, “down” + absol of *avadihati*, “increases, accumulates,” ie, bloats up). The stock *yāva-d-attham ~am bhuñjitvā*: D 3:238,23; M 1:102,3; A 3:222,25, 249,26 4:343,13+ 21, 461,11, 5:18,23, 20,17; Vbh 378,1; ThaA 1:190,19 ≈ SA 2:107,9 ≈ Vism 33,25 (comys: *~an ti udara, -pūram, taṃ hi udaram avadehanato ~an ti vuccati*, DA 1031,15); MA 2:69,7 = AA 3:325,27 = VbhA 504,22; *udaram avadihitvā upacinitvā pūretvā*, AA 3:307,18); *~am bhutvā*, Tha 935.

12.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, who *lives the holy life aspiring for a certain host of devas, thus: 'By this moral virtue [ritual] or vow or asceticism or holy life, may I become this deva or that deva!'*

his mind does not tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

12.3 For one whose mind does *not* tend to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving, this is thus his **5th mental bondage** that has *not* been cut off.

These are his 5 mental bondages that have *not* cut off.

THE THREEFOLD GROWTH

13 Indeed, bhikshus, that any monk who has *not* abandoned the 5 mental barrennesses, *not* cut off the 5 mental bondages, would ever come to *growth, increase, abundance* in this Dharma-Vinaya—this is impossible. [§2]

THE “ABANDONED” (POSITIVE) CYCLE

14 Bhikshus, that any monk who *has abandoned* the 5 mental barrennesses, *has cut off* the 5 mental bondages, would indeed attain **growth, abundance, abundance**¹³⁵ in this Dharma-Vinaya—this is possible [this is the case]. [§2]

The 5 mental barrennesses (*ceto,khila*) abandoned

15 What are his 5 mental barrennesses that *have* been abandoned?

(1) Here, bhikshus, a monk is *neither* doubtful *nor* uncertain, but committed and faithful in the teacher.¹³⁶ [§3]

15.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful to the teacher,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

15.3 For one *whose mind in tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,* this is thus his **1st mental barrenness** that *has* been abandoned.

16 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is *neither* doubtful *nor* uncertain, but committed and faithful to the Dharma [the teaching]. [§4]

16.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful in the Dharma,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

16.3 For one *whose mind in tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,* this is thus his **2nd mental barrenness** that *has* been abandoned.

17 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is *neither* doubtful *nor* uncertain, but committed and faithful to the sangha [the spiritual community]. [§5]

¹³³ Considering the mind of such a misguided monk, we would be justified to render *sīla* here more broadly to include “rituals.” On Pali polysemy, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2).

¹³⁴ *Puna c’aparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu aññataraṃ deva,nikāyaṃ pañidhāya brahma,cariyaṃ carati, “iminā ’haṃ sīlena vā vatena vā tapena vā brahma,cariyena vā devo vā bhavissāmi dev’aññatara vā ti.* Comy explains that *deva* means “a mighty deva” (*mahēsakkha,deva*) (incl deva-lords and brahmas) and *dev’aññatara* as “a deva of lesser might” (*appēsakkha,deva*) (ie one of a heavenly host) (MA 2:69,15).

¹³⁵ On the significance of these 3 words, see §2 n.

¹³⁶ *Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu satthari na kaṅkhati na vicikicchati adhimuccati sampasādati.*

16.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful in the sangha,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

16.3 For one *whose mind in tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **3rd mental barrenness** that *has* been abandoned.

18 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is *neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful to the training.* [§6]

16.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is neither doubtful nor uncertain, but committed and faithful in the training,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

16.3 For one *whose mind in tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **4th mental barrenness** that *has* been abandoned.

19 (5) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is ***neither angry nor displeased with fellow brahmafārers [celibate colleagues], his heart untroubled, not unfeeling [not callous].***¹³⁷

19.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, who is ***neither angry nor displeased with fellow brahmafārers [celibate colleagues], his heart untroubled, not unfeeling,***

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving. [103]

19.3 For one *whose mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **5th mental barrenness** that *has* been abandoned.

These are his 5 mental barrennesses that he *has* abandoned.

The 5 mental bondages (*cetaso, vinibandha*) abandoned

20 What are his 5 mental bondages that have been well cut off?¹³⁸

20.2 (1) Here, bhikshus, a monk is rid of lust, rid of desire, rid of love, rid of thirst, rid of fever, rid of craving for **sensual pleasures** (*kāme*). [§8.2]

20.3 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is rid of lust, rid of desire, rid of love, rid of thirst, rid of fever, rid of craving for sensual pleasure,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

20.4 For one *whose mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **1st mental bondage** that *has* been well cut off.¹³⁹

21 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is rid of lust, rid of desire, rid of love, rid of thirst, rid of fever, rid of craving for **the body** (*kāya*).¹⁴⁰ [§9]

21.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is rid of lust, rid of desire, rid of love, rid of thirst, rid of fever, rid of craving for the body,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

21.3 For one *whose mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **2nd mental bondage** that *has* been well cut off.

¹³⁷ *Puna ca param bhikkhave bhikkhu sa, brahma.cārīsu na kupito hoti atta, mano* [Be na anatta, mano; Ce Ee atta, mano] *anāhata, citto akhila, jāto.*

¹³⁸ *Katamā'ssa pañca cetaso, vinibandhā susamucchinnā honti.*

¹³⁹ *Yassa cittaṃ namati ātappāya anuyogāya sātaccāya padhānāya, evam assāyaṃ paṭhamo cetaso, vinibandho susamucchinno hoti.*

¹⁴⁰ *Kāye*, which, foll comy, I take as locative sg, since it refers to lust and attachment towards our own body (MA 2:69,6).

22 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk is rid of lust, rid of desire, rid of love, rid of thirst, rid of fever, rid of craving for **form** (*rūpe*). [§10]

22.3 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who is rid of lust, rid of desire, rid of love, rid of thirst, rid of fever, rid of craving for form,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

22.4 For one *whose mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **3rd mental bondage** that *has* been well cut off.

23 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk *neither eats to overfill his belly nor dwells indulging in the pleasures of the bed, of lying down, of sleeping.*¹⁴¹ [§11]

23.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who neither eats to overfill his belly nor dwells indulging in the pleasures of the bed, of lying down, of sleeping,*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

23.3 For one *whose mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **4th mental bondage** that *has* been well cut off.

24 (5) Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk **does not live the holy life aspiring for a certain host of devas**, thus: ‘By this moral virtue or vow or asceticism or holy life, may I become this deva or that deva!’ [§12]

24.2 For such a monk, bhikshus, *who does not live the holy life aspiring for a certain host of devas, thus: ‘By this moral virtue or vow or asceticism or holy life, may I become this deva or that deva!’*

his mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving.

24.3 For one *whose mind tends to ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving,*
this is thus his **5th mental bondage** that *has* been well cut off.

These are his 5 mental bondages that *have* been well cut off.

THE THREEFOLD GROWTH

25 Indeed, bhikshus, that any monk who *has* abandoned the 5 mental barrennesses, *has* cut off the 5 mental bondages, would surely attain growth, increase, abundance in this Dharma-Vinaya—this is possible [this is the case]. [§§13-14]

The 4 bases of success (*iddhi, pāda*) and exertion¹⁴² [3.3.4.4]

26 (1) He cultivates the base of success that is the accomplishment in the (volitional) formation¹⁴³ of effort and concentration through **zeal**.¹⁴⁴ *chanda, samādhi, padhāna, saṅkhāra*

¹⁴¹ *Puna ca param bhikkhave bhikkhu na yāvad-attham udarāvadehakam bhuñjitvā seyya, sukham passa, sukham middha, sukham anuyutto viharati.*

¹⁴² The 4 bases of success (*iddhi, pāda*) is one of the 7 sets (SD 10.1) forming the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi, -pakkhiya dhamma*): SD 10.1. They are the special foundations of the 5 mundane direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) (only the 6th, that of the destruction of the “influxes” or arhathood is supermundane): see **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11,55-66), SD 1.7; SD 27.5a (5). See Vbh 216-226 (ch 9) & comy (VbhA 303-309); **Catu Iddhi, pāda**, SD 10.3; also **Cakka, vatti Siha, nāda S** (D 26,28/3:77, 221), SD 36.10; **Iddhi Samy** (S 51/5:254-293); **Iddhi, pāda Ss** (A 1.28.18-21/1:39 = A:B 1.410-413); Vism 12.50-53/385.

¹⁴³ *Padhāna, saṅkhāra*, “determined striving.” There is the rare comy form, *padhānābhisāṅkhāra*, “volitional striving” (VbhA 304). See SD 10.3 (1.1.1).

¹⁴⁴ *Chanda, samādhi, padhāna, saṅkhāra, samannāgataṃ iddhi, pādāṃ*. See **Iddhi, pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20.3/-5:276 f), SD 28.14, where *chanda* is tr as “enthusiasm.” Cf **D 26.28/3:77**, **33.1.11(3)/3:221**; **S 51.11/5:263-266**; **A 1.20.18/1:39**; **Vbh 431-434/216 f**; **Vism 12.508/385**.

- (2) *He cultivates the base of success that is the accomplishment in the formation of effort and concentration through energy.*¹⁴⁵ *vīriya,samādhi,padhāna,saṅkhāra*
- (3) *He cultivates the base of success that is the accomplishment in the formation of effort*¹⁴⁶ *and concentration through mind.*¹⁴⁷ *citta,samādhi,padhāna,saṅkhāra*
- (4) *He cultivates the base of success that is the accomplishment in the formation of effort and concentration through investigation,*¹⁴⁸ *vīmaṃsā,samādhi,padhāna,saṅkhāra*
- (5) and with **exertion** as the fifth.¹⁴⁹ *ussoḷhī-yeva pañcamī*

27 The monk who possesses these 15 factors including exertion¹⁵⁰ **[104]** is capable of breaking through,¹⁵¹ *bhabbo abhinibbidāya*
 capable of self-awakening, *bhabbo sambodhāya*
 capable of attaining the supreme security from the yoke.¹⁵² *bhabbo anuttarassa yoga-k,khemassa adhigamāya*

THE PARABLE OF THE HATCHLINGS¹⁵³ [3.3.4.5]

28 Suppose,¹⁵⁴ bhikshus, there were a hen with 8 or 10 or 12 eggs, which she properly broods, properly warms [incubates], properly hatches.¹⁵⁵ Even though she may not wish,¹⁵⁶

‘O, now, may my chicks pierce through the egg-shells with the points of their claw or spur or beak, and break out safely!’¹⁵⁷

29 yet the chicks are capable of piercing their shells with the points of their claw or spur or beak, and hatching out safely.

30 Even so, bhikshus, a monk who possesses these 15 factors including exertion is capable of breaking through, capable of self-awakening, capable of attaining the supreme security from the yoke.

31 The Blessed One said this. The monks, joyful at heart, approved of the Blessed One’s word.

¹⁴⁵ *Vīriya,samādhi,padhāna,saṅkhāra,samannāgataṃ iddhi,pādaṃ.*

¹⁴⁶ The “mind” (*citta*) is mental purity.

¹⁴⁷ *Citta,samādhi,padhāna,saṅkhāra,samannāgataṃ iddhi,pādaṃ.*

¹⁴⁸ *Vīmaṃsā,samādhi,padhāna,saṅkhāra,samannāgataṃ iddhi,pādaṃ.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ussolhī-y-eva pañcamī.* Comy says that **ussoḷhī** is the energy to be applied all that needs to be done (in all the bases of success) (*sabbattha kattabba,viriyam*, MA 2:69,25). See (3.3.3).

¹⁵⁰ “The 15 factors including exertion” (*ussoḷhi,pañña.ras’aṅga*) are the abandoning of the 5 barrennesses and of the 5 bondages, and the 5 “bases of success” [§26].

¹⁵¹ Comy: Breaking through the defilements (*kilesa*) by way of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) (MA 2:69,50).

¹⁵² “The supreme security from the yoke” (*anuttara yoga-k,khema*) is arhathood (*khemassa arahatta*, MA 2:69,-32), ie, liberation from the 4 yokes (*yoga = āsava*, “influxes” of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16,2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). See **Mūla,pariyāya S** (M 1,27), SD 11.8; **Ogha Pañha S**, S 38.11 @ SD 30.3(1.4).

¹⁵³ This is a well known parable: **Sekha S** (M 1:357/M 53,19-22), SD 21.14 (on dhyanas) = **Vinaya,dhara S 1** (A 7.71/4:126) = **Vasijaṭa S** (S 22.101/3:153 f), SD 15.2; cf **Verañja S** (A 8.11/4:176), SD = **Pār 1.1.4** (V 3:3 f).

¹⁵⁴ Here, this parable illustrates the 15 qualities of a disciple “who is capable of breaking out, capable of self-awakening, capable of attaining the supreme security from bondage” [§§15-27]. In **Sekha S** (M 53), the same parable illustrates a different set of 15 qualities of such a disciple (M 53,19/1:357), SD 21.14. **Vāsi,jaṭa S** (S 22.101) gives two such parables: the first (§7-11/3:153) illustrates the disciple’s failure, while the second (§14-17/3:154) his progress = (**Nāvā**) **Bhāvanā S** (A 7.67), SD 15.22. Cf V 3:3; A 4:176. See MA 2:69 f.

¹⁵⁵ *Seyyathā’pi mahānāma kukkuṭiyā aṇḍāni aṭṭha vā dasa vā dvādasa vā, tan’assu kukkuṭiyā sammā adhisayitāni sammā pariseditāni sammā paribhāvitāni.*

¹⁵⁶ Cf **Iṭṭha S** (A 5.43), where the Buddha declares that he does not teach that long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth are to be obtained through prayer or wishing, but through right living and effort. (A 5.43/3:47-49), SD 47.2.

¹⁵⁷ *Aho vat’ime kukkuṭa,potakā pāda,nakha,sikhāya vā mukha,tuṇḍakena vā aṇḍa,kosaṃ padāletvā sotthinā abhinibbhijjeyyun’ti.*

— evaṃ —

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